

I Need You... by Forever_a_king_24

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Characters: Dustin Henderson, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Will Byers

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Summary:

They were just two kids when they met...

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

Hey guys!! Many of my readers know me from writing stories about the Women's Soccer team. I was asked by some friends to try and write a story pertaining to the Stranger Things kids, so here we are. Hopefully you guys like this chapter. I'm not sure if this is something that I am going to continue or not. I guess I'll just see what you all think and if you want me to continue with it or not. So take a look and let me know what you think... I love answering and bouncing ideas and opinions off in the comments. I can't wait to hear from you. Thank you for taking the time to read this!!

As always, ENJOY!!!!

“Michael!” Karen Wheeler calls up the stairs. “It’s 7:15. You need to come eat breakfast or you’re going to be late to school!”

“Coming!” Mike shouts from his bedroom, looking into the mirror one last time to make sure his hair doesn’t look like he had just woken up 5 minutes ago.

The tall and lanky boy grabs his backpack before running down the stairs. Nancy, his older sister who is in her sophomore year of college and lives at home, is already at the table; a book in hand with her eyes fixed on a page as she eats her toast at the same time.

Mike doesn’t quite understand how she can study this early. All he can focus on is eating; he can’t even imagine trying to study when he has literally been up for maybe 15 minutes. Obviously, Nancy was the good student between the two of them.

Holly, Mike’s little sister, is a mixture of both. Being so young and in elementary school, little Holly doesn’t have to worry too much about schoolwork and everything yet. Hell, they’re still trying to learn how to properly do math.

"Mike, honey, don't forget your father and I will be heading to Indianapolis this afternoon and Holly is coming with us." Karen informs her son as he eats his breakfast. "It'll just be you taking care of the house this weekend."

"You're not going to be here?" Mike turns to ask his sister.

"No." Nancy shakes her head. "Steve and I are going to the lake this weekend with our friends."

"You're not going to be drinking up there, right honey?" Karen asks her daughter, who looks at her mom with an incredulous look.

"Um, I don't know." Nancy stutters. "Maybe. Is there a problem with that?"

"I just want you to be safe up there." Karen says with concern. "I know there may be a lot of people because of the holiday."

"It's just President's day." Nancy says and her mom continues.

"Just, please be careful." Karen reiterates. "No drinking and driving. For you or anyone."

"I know mom." Nancy nods her head. "Barbara and Jonathon will be going with us, along with others. Believe me, we'll be safe."

"Okay, good." Karen says with satisfaction and turns to look at Mike, who's about finished with his breakfast. "Michael, you're going to be safe this weekend too while we are away, right?"

"Yeah." Mike nods. "Just going to hang out with the guys."

"If you have them here, can you please make sure the house doesn't get destroyed?" Karen asks her son. "And tell Dustin that we have no pudding, so not to even bother looking for it."

"Like that's ever stopped him before." Nancy says with a laugh.

"It'll be fine, mom." Mike tells her as he takes his empty plate to the sink. "I have to go though. I'm picking up Lucas and Dustin for school."

“Oh okay. Come here, give me a hug.” Karen reaches out for her son, who is a solid 4 inches or so taller than her. “We’ll be gone before you get home. If you need anything, just call your father or I. We’ll have our phones on us.”

“Okay.” Mike nods as he tries to pull away from the hug.

“Or you can call Nancy.” Karen begins but is interrupted.

“No you can’t.” Nancy shakes her head, receiving a bit of a glare from her mother.

“Yes, you can.” Karen says again, looking at Nancy with emphasis. “We’ll be back late Monday, so you may be on your own for dinner till then. Are you sure you don’t want to go with us?”

“Yeah, I’m sure.” Mike tells her. “I’ll be fine. I’ll stay at Will’s or something if I don’t want to stay here alone.”

“You promise?” Karen asks her son.

“Yeah, I promise.” Mike says and looks down at his watch. “Mom, I really need to go. We’re meeting Will in the AV room before first period and if I don’t leave now, then I’m going to be late.”

“Okay, okay.” Karen nods and hugs her son one more time. “I love you. We’ll only be gone for a few days. If you need anything, call. And I expect at least one text every day. I want to know you’re okay.”

“Seriously mom?” Mike asks. “I’m 17.”

“Michael!” Karen looks at her son with a look he knows all too well.

“Okay, fine.” Mike shrugs. “But I got to go.”

“I know.” Karen breathes out after pulling him in for one more hug. “Okay, go. Have fun at school.”

“Have fun in Indianapolis.” Mike says as he grabs his bag from the chair. “I love you. Bye.”

“Bye!” Karen calls out as Mike rushes out the door after giving Holly

a hug and kiss on the cheek.

Mike quickly gets into his car after running out of the house. Looking at his watch, he knows he needs to hurry so he doesn't be late. His first stop is to Lucas', which luckily, is only across the road and 3 houses down.

Mike pulls up to the front of his house and starts to honk. After the second one, Lucas pokes his head out the door and holds up a finger to show that he needs a minute. Mike watches as his friend is gathering everything he needs as he's halfway out the door.

"Bye Mom!" Lucas shouts as he runs out towards Mike's car. "Hey man!"

"Hey." Mike greets as his friend gets into the passenger's seat.

"Sorry." Lucas apologizes as Mike drives off. "I was trying to find my chemistry notes for class."

"No worries." Mike shakes his head. "We just have to go grab Dustin before we head to school."

"Dustin?" Lucas asks. "Why can't he drive his car?"

"His mom took hers to the shop and needed his I guess." Mike answers.

"Oh, okay." Lucas nods in content as he looks at his phone.

The two drive in a content silence until they reach Dustin's house. Mike, as he did with Lucas, honks his horn to let him know their out front. Dustin rushes out the door, fumbling to zip up his backpack as he was just stuffing papers into it.

"Dustin, honey." Dustin mom calls out from the front door, holding her cat in her arms. "Be safe! Make good choices!"

"Bye mom!" Dustin calls back as he jumps into the back of Mike's car. "Love you!"

"You boys have a great day at school." She waves to the boys.

"We will." They all shout and wave back before Mike drives off.

"What the shit?" Dustin breathes out to his friends. "Mike, I thought you were going to be here 10 minutes ago?"

"I was but I had to say bye to my mom." Mike explains. "Her, Holly, and my dad are going out of town this weekend and will be gone before I get home from school."

"So it's just you and Nancy home all weekend?" Lucas asks.

"No." Mike shakes his head. "Just me. She's going to the lake with Steve and them this weekend."

"What?" Dustin says with a small smile on his face. "So you're home alone all weekend? Like, no parents or anyone telling you no?"

"Yeah." Mike nods his head. "I told you guys this the other day already."

"When?" Lucas turns to ask him.

"No you didn't." Dustin answers at the same time.

"Yeah, I did." Mike protests. "It was at lunch. We were at our table with Will. Lucas, you and Max were half making out the entire time. And Dustin, you were eating your pudding and protesting to Will about the whether Pluto should be considered a planet or not still. Remember?"

"Honestly, dude." Lucas breathes out with a smile. "I didn't hear you say one damn word."

"Probably because Max's tongue was down your throat distracting you." Dustin teases, causing Lucas to laugh.

"You remember though, right Dustin?" Mike asks his friend as he looks in his rear-view mirror to him.

"Unless you had a pliable reason about Pluto or you were chocolate pudding, I didn't hear anything you said." Dustin admits. "Are you sure you even said anything to us?"

“Whatever.” Mike shakes his head; annoyed at the conversation, or lack thereof, with his friends.

The boys drive the next few minutes talking about their weekend plans on the way to school. Once Mike parks, the three of them grab their bags and head to the AV room to meet Will.

They quickly make their ways through the semi crowded hallways to the room. Knowing it wouldn’t be locked since Will was probably already in there, the three boys walk straight in. And to their expectation, Will was sitting there on the computer looking up some stuff.

“Hey guys!” Will says with a smile to his three closest friends.

“Sorry we’re late.” Mike says as he pulls up a chair next to the younger boy.

“Yeah, Mike had to kiss his mommy goodbye.” Dustin teases and Mike sends a death glare his way, while the other two friends laugh.

“Fuck off!” Mike says, causing Dustin to laugh even more.

“He’s not denying it.” Lucas adds on, winking to Will.

“Seriously?” Mike breathes out exasperated. “It’s too early to be receiving shit from you guys.”

“It’s never too early, buddy.” Dustin tells his friend with a simple shrug and smirk.

“Whatever.” Mike shakes his head, looking back over to the computer screen that Will was sitting in front of. “What are you looking at?”

“I’m trying to put together some visual audio for my senior project.” Will answers, causing Lucas to smack his head.

“Fuck! I totally forgot about the project.” Lucas whines. “When is it due, again?”

“A week before school ends.” Will tells him.

“You know, so you can graduate?” Dustin continues on. “Duh!”

“Oh, so I have until May?” Lucas says and the three nod their heads. “I got plenty of time.”

“Not if you plan on making it a good one.” Mike shakes his head.

“Mr. Clarke said he’ll help out whenever we needed him.” Lucas says like he has a plan to the whole thing. “I’ll be fine.”

“Whatever you say.” Mike simply says.

“Yeah, and I can’t wait to watch you in the stands as we all are walking across the stage graduating and you’re not.” Dustin says with a smile. “I’ll make sure to thank you in my speech.”

“There’s no way in hell you’ll be making a speech.” Lucas says bitterly back.

“Uh, bull shit.” Dustin says, confusing the three others.

“What do you mean?” Will asks. “Are you making a speech?”

“You damn fucking right I am.” Dustin smiles widely. “Class President, bitches.”

“Worst decision this school has ever made.” Lucas rolls his eyes.

“Thank yourself.” Dustin points to him. “You voted for me. You all did.”

“Uh, not exactly.” Lucas shakes his head.

“What?” Dustin asks, looking around the room to see none of his friends are making eye contact with him. “Did someone not vote for me?”

“I was going to.” Will says but hesitates for a brief second.

“Okay, and then what?” Dustin asks him.

“Then I was talking with Jaden and he convinced me to vote for him.” Will admits.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Dustin asks with shock. “You voted for that dickhead instead of me?”

“I knew you were going to win.” Will tells him honestly. “So I figured if you didn’t get my vote it wouldn’t hurt you at all.”

“Wow.” Dustin breathes out. “Nice to know one of my friends didn’t vote for me.”

“Not just one.” Lucas says quietly, looking down at his feet.

“You didn’t vote for me either?” Dustin asks with confusion. “Seriously?”

“Dude, you were going against my girlfriend.” Lucas tries to explain. “What the hell was I supposed to do?”

“Vote for me!” Dustin says as if it was the most obvious thing in the world. “You said you were going to!”

“Yeah...” Lucas drags out. “But after having a small, and brief talk with Max, she made me realize that I should vote for her.”

“You mean when her hand was down your pants and lips on your neck?” Will questions and Mike can’t help the laugh that escapes from his throat.

“Fuck off, Byers!” Lucas snaps, causing Will and Mike to laugh even more.

“You didn’t vote for me because you got a handy from your girlfriend?” Dustin repeats as he looks at his friend. “You fucking dick!”

“Sorry bro.” Lucas simply breathes out as he shakes his head. “Max just made some really good points.”

“Pansy.” Dustin shakes his head, as Lucas just smirks. “Please tell me that I can count on you to have voted for me. Right, Mike?”

“Uh, yeah.” Mike tries to find the right words to say. “About that...”

“Are you kidding me?” Dustin says with shock and his final friend begins his explanation.

“I didn’t vote for anyone.” Mike explains. “I didn’t vote at all.”

“Why not?” Dustin asks.

“I didn’t want to vote.” Mike simply shrugs. “Everyone knew you were going to win anyways, so there was no need for me to vote too.”

“What if I had lost by one vote?” Dustin asks the three. “One of you assholes could have been the reason why I lost.”

“But you didn’t.” Lucas tells him. “You won. So that reasoning and statement is invalid.”

“Fuck off, okay?” Dustin snaps back. “None of you assholes voted for me.”

“Dude, if we thought there was any chance that you wouldn’t win, we would have made sure to vote.” Mike says, trying to explain to him. “But since we, and everyone in the whole god damn school knew you were going to win, we knew it wouldn’t matter.”

“Really?” Dustin asks.

“Yeah, man.” Lucas says honestly. “Seriously, even Max knew you were going to win but I still had to vote for her so she wouldn’t be pissed.”

“Okay.” Dustin says accepting their explanations. “You guys are still assholes though.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah.” Mike laughs. “We know.”

“Shit!” Lucas says looking down at his phone, causing everyone to look at him.

“What?” Mike asks his friend with concern.

“I was supposed to meet Max at her locker before class.” Lucas says and the guys all look at each other. “What?”

“Seriously, dude?” Dustin asks and Lucas looks at him with confusion.

“Seriously what?” Lucas repeats.

“Why does she want you to meet her at her locker?” Mike asks him.

“So I can walk with her to Chem.” Lucas says and Dustin shakes his head.

“You’re whipped dude.” Dustin tells him with a laugh. “Like she owns you!”

“She doesn’t not!” Lucas protests. “And I’m not whipped. I just like to make her happy.”

“Oh, okay.” Dustin nods sarcastically. “I feel like there’s another name for when you do everything you can to make your girlfriend happy. You know, where anything she asks, or wants, you do it for her... What’s that word?”

“Whipped.” Will smiles and Dustin nods enthusiastically.

“That’s right!” Dustin smiles widely and looks at Lucas. “WHIPPED!”

“Alright, fuck off.” Lucas shakes his head. “All of you!”

“It’s okay, Lukey.” Dustin teases, throwing his arm around his friend’s shoulders. “You’re only human. It’s natural to give in to everything when you’re getting some every other night from her.”

“Dustin!” Lucas shouts, causing his friend to laugh uncontrollably. “I can’t stand you.”

RING...

“Shit, that’s the bell.” Mike says, jumping to his feet to grab his backpack so he can head to class.

“Oh.” Dustin groans. “Max is going to be pissed at you!”

“Shut up!” Lucas glares just as his phone beeps with a new message;

no doubt from Max.

"I'm not even going to say a word." Dustin smirks.

"Don't worry Lucas." Will says. "You can just make it up to her tonight at Tayler's."

"You're right." Lucas nods his head. "Oh I almost forgot, Max said that there's a \$2 fee so we can cover for all of the alcohol when you walk into the house. That cool with you guys?"

"Yeah." Will says and Dustin nods his head in agreement.

"Mike?" Lucas turns to ask his friend as they make their way to class. "You cool with that?"

"I don't think I'm going to go." Mike tells them, causing all boys to stop in their tracks to look at him.

"You're joking, right?" Lucas asks. "You have to go!"

"Yeah, come on Mike!" Will urges his friend. "What else do you have better to do then come to a party with us?"

"Sleep and be home alone." Mike shrugs and receives groans from his friends.

"Dude come on." Dustin groans. "You have the rest of the weekend to do that."

"Yeah, plus an actual day on Monday!" Lucas adds on to help convince his friend.

"You have to go!" Will tries to emphasize the point. "Please?"

"Fine." Mike groans as they walk into class to take their seats.

"Fuck yeah!" Dustin says pumped, receiving looks for Mr. Clarke. "Sorry!"

"There you are!" Max says as she takes a seat next to Lucas at their lab bench. "Where were you this morning?"

“He was helping us with a project in the AV room.” Mike answers to help his friend out.

“Yeah, he was looking over my senior project.” Will continues on. “Sorry!”

“Oh, okay.” Max shrugs, accepting the reasoning. “You’re lucky!”

“Dude, she probably would have cut your balls off.” Dustin half whispers across the table to Lucas, causing Max to look at him straight in the eyes.

“Good guess.” Max says with a wink, causing Dustin’s eyes to go wide as he turns to whisper to Mike.

“Do you think she’s kidding?” He asks seriously.

“Does Max really ever kid?” Mike answers and the realization comes over Dustin.

“Holy shit!” Dustin breathes out, again causing Mr. Clarke to look at him. “Sorry Mr. Clarke!”

“Dude!” Mike laughs. “You’re going to get us in trouble. Stop!”

“I just all of a sudden feel bad for Lucas.” Dustin answers, causing the table, Lucas and Max included, to laugh. “Man, more power to you.”

“Thanks.” Lucas shakes his head laughing.

Mr. Clarke begins his lecture of the day for the class to follow along. The group does, answering questions when needed, before being turned loose to work on their Chemical compounds lab.

“Oh before I forget.” Max says out of nowhere as they work on their lab. “The party has a \$2 cover fee for all of the alcohol tonight. You guys are cool with that, right?”

“Yeah.” Dustin nods his head.

“I told them about it earlier.” Lucas tells her, receiving a small smile from Max.

“Good.” Max says. “Thank you!”

“It’s at Tayler’s, right?” Will asks and Max nods her head.

“Yeah.” Max explains. “It’s her 18th birthday and her parent’s will be out of town for the night and said she could have a party.”

“That’s cool.” Will says. “How many people will there be there?”

“Well, she is pretty popular.” Max answers. “So I’m guessing a lot.”

“Okay.” Will nods gently.

“Don’t worry.” Max leans in to tell him. “Jaden will be there and what I’ve heard is that he is looking forward to talking with a certain Byers tonight.”

“Really?” Will asks as his face lights up.

“Yeah.” Max smiles widely.

“Cool.” Will says, smiling besides himself.

“We can all crash at Mike’s afterwards, right buddy?” Dustin asks his friend.

“Yeah.” Mike nods, looking up from his lab sheet. “Sure.”

“Cool.” Lucas smiles. “Can I get a ride with you to the party?”

“Me too?” Will asks and Dustin nods along.

“Yeah.” Mike answers. “I can drive everyone tonight.”

“I won’t need a ride.” Max tells him. “I’m going with Kate and Jess early to help Tayler set up.”

“Okay.” Mike simply nods.

“Oh, and Kate said that her at James are completely broken up.” Max says with a smirk to Dustin. “Like for good.”

“Hell yeah!” Dustin says loudly, causing the class to turn to look at

him.

“Mr. Henderson!” Mr. Clarke looks at him with confusion. “Everything okay?”

“Uh, yeah.” Dustin stutters out, trying to think of something to say. “Just stoked that our chemical reactor reached balanced, Mr. Clarke.”

“Exciting stuff, right?” Mr. Clarke asks, and Dustin nods his head in agreement.

“Yes sir.” Dustin smiles. “Exciting for sure.”

“Dumbass.” Lucas shakes his head at his friend.

“Shut up.” Dustin laughs and they all go back to finishing their lab before the class ends.

The teenagers go through the day as normal, without anything exciting really happening. Since it was a holiday weekend, they had a half day. That obviously made the day 10 times better.

All of the boys head to their homes, with Mike driving most of them, after school. After dropping Lucas off at his house, Mike finally gets to go home.

As soon as he enters, he sees that his parent’s and Holly have left and it’s just him home for the entire weekend. He goes directly to the refrigerator, which he notices a note from his mom.

‘Michael,
Call us if you need anything this weekend. Left you \$100 on the counter for dinner and fun. Be safe! Don’t forget to text me at least once every day. Love you!’

Mike shakes his head at his mother’s note. Of course she would put emphasis on him texting her at least once every day. Even though he’s 17 and a senior in high school, she won’t allow him to forget that he’s her little boy.

The teenager crumples the note and tosses it in the trash before opening up the fridge. Since they had a half day, he didn’t eat lunch

at school, so he was starving. Though once he opened it, he realized that there was literally nothing in there for him to eat; anything good anyways.

Mike closes the fridge and stands there for a second to try and think about what to do next. Looking down at the counter, seeing the money his mother left for him, the teenager's mind was made up. Grabbing it off the counter, he hurries out the door to go pick up something to eat.

Mike drives downtown to the little burger joint that he enjoys. Noticing that the drive thru line was a bit too long, he parks his Jeep to head inside to order.

Mike walks up to the counter to notice that the line is much shorter than the one outside. He made a good choice in coming in to order. There were only two people in front of him and he knew the wait will be much shorter than outside's.

After only about a minute, Mike is at the counter ordering his food. Quickly deciding on a bacon cheeseburger with a side of chili cheese fries, he hands over some money to pay. Receiving his number to be called, Mike walks over and stands to the side to wait for his order to be finished.

As he waits, he pulls out his phone to look through social media to pass the time. Noticing he has a few missed texts from his group chat with the guys, he reads them through and answers them back.

As he continues looking through his phone, he hears the most subtle, and gentle, tone of voice he's ever heard. How did he hear it surprises me because it was so gentle, but he's glad he did. Looking up to see where the voice comes from, he notices a very beautiful girl standing in front of him.

One that he's seen a few times in school walking by his locker this year. He doesn't know why, but he can't take his eyes off of her as he watches her try to order some food. Since he was watching her, he hears some of the conversation she and the cashier was having.

"Can I have a double bacon cheeseburger with a medium fry and

Pepsi? And a crispy chicken sandwich with no tomatoes?” She orders in her delicate tone of voice. “And also a side of chili cheese fries, please?”

“Okay, a double bacon cheeseburger combo with a medium fry and Pepsi, and also a crispy chicken sandwich with no tomatoes and a side of chili cheese fries.” The cashier repeats back and the young girl nods. “Want anything to drink with that last one?”

“No thank you.” The girl shakes her head.

“Okay.” The cashier nods. “That will be \$18.35.”

“Oh shoot, I think I only have \$15.” She says sadly as she looks through her wallet to see if she has anymore money on her. “Ugh, I left my card in my locker.”

“Um, would you like to change your order then?” The guy behind the counter asks as she struggles to find any more money.

“Uh, yeah.” She reluctantly nods. “I’ll just have the chicken sandwich. You can take away the chi...”

“Hold on.” Mike interrupts, speaking without even thinking. “Here, this should cover the rest.”

“You don’t have to do that.” The girl turns to look at him as he attempts to hand the cashier a \$5 to cover the rest of the order.

“It’s okay, really.” Mike shakes his head. “It’s only a couple dollars.”

“I feel bad, though.” She tells him and as she looks him in the eyes, Mike can’t help but feel his heart skip a beat at her beauty. “I can just not get the chili cheese fries, it’s fine.”

“No.” Mike half shouts, shaking his head to retract his outburst. “No, it’s okay. I can help pay for it.”

“But you don’t have to.” She begins to explain but Mike cuts her off.

“But I want to.” He smiles, causing her to smile back. “Here.”

“Uh.” The cashier reaches out to take the money as he looks at the girl, who nods. “Thank you. Here’s your number and change.”

“Thank you.” She smiles as she walks over to where Mike moved to stand so she could finish her ordering. “Here you go.”

“Huh?” Mike says with confusion as she reaches out with her hand.

“Here’s the rest of the change of the \$5.” She says and he shakes his head.

“Oh, you keep it.” Mike tells her.

“No way!” She rejects. “It’s yours.”

“It’s fine.” He says. “You keep it. Just in case you ever need change for anything else.”

“I don’t need your charity.” She says with an angry tone and Mike looks at her with confusion. “I can pay for things myself. I don’t need you offering to pay for me.”

“Uh, I didn’t mean to.” Mike stutters, not really knowing what to say. “I just wanted to help pay for your food, so you could get what you wanted and not have to change it. I definitely didn’t mean to make it seem like charity or anything.”

“Well, I can take care of myself, thank you!” She quips and reaches out with the change in her hand to give to him.

“I don’t doubt it.” He laughs and grabs his food when his number is called.

“Hey!” She says as he begins to walk away. “Take your change back.”

“You keep it.” He flashes a smile at her, not understanding where all of a sudden, this smooth confidence came from. “It’s yours now.”

“I... uh.” She stutters as he turns to walk away to head out to his Jeep.

The girl stands there, confused as to what just happened. A pinch of

annoyance runs throughout her body, but that can't stop the small smile that appears on her face because of the kind boy that helped pay for her food.

She has to admit, even though she would have been completely fine with not getting the fries, she's happy she got to keep them. She really did want them because they were so delicious.

Before she can even react or think too much about it, her number was called, and her order was ready. She quickly grabs it and hurries out the door when she hears her phone ring and she sees who it was. She answers it just as she jumps into her car.

"I just got the food." She says into the phone. "I'm on my way home now. Yes, I got your Pepsi. I'll be home in a couple minutes. Bye."

She hangs up the phone, buckles her seatbelt, and drives away. Hurrying home so they can enjoy the delicious meal that she had help paying for by some boy. Some boy who has a pretty cute smile, she must admit.

D&D Squad

Lucas: What time are u comin to get us?

Dustin: I'm ready now

Will: I can drive to your house if that's easier.

Lucas: Why didn't u offer to drive then?

Will: I don't know. I can drive if it's easier.

Dustin: Pick me up on the way to Mike's

Will: I can do that.

Will: Do you want me to pick you up too Lucas?

Lucas: Nah I can just walk over to Mike's

Dustin: Cool. When should we meet at Mike's?

Will: When does the party start again?

Lucas: 8

Will: It's already 8:20 now.

Dustin: Perfect. We will be right on time.

Dustin: I say we head to Mike's now.

Dustin: We can take a shot and then head to the party.

Will: A shot?

Dustin: Yeah buddy. Don't be a pansy, asshole.

Lucas: I'm down for a shot. I'll head over to Mike's now

Will: I'm on my way to pick you up Dustin

Dustin: Cool

Lucas: Mike ur home right?

Dustin: HELLO

Dustin: ASSHOLE

Dustin: YOU THERE

Dustin: FUCK!!

Dustin: I think we lost Mike

Lucas: Well that blows

Lucas: At least we can have his house for the weekend

Will: One last tribute to our friend

Dustin: Hell yeah

Dustin: I call his Playstation4

Lucas: Fuck u! I get it.

Dustin: I already called it. Sucks to suck.

Will: I get his XBOX.

Lucas: Good call Will

*Fuck off!
All of you!
Assholes!*

Dustin: HAHAAHAHA

*I was in the shower.
Dickheads*

Lucas: OH... We KNOW what that means

Dustin: BOW CHICKA WOWOW

Will: LMFAO

I hate you guys!

Dustin: We know

Dustin: We are on our way

Dustin: So clean up and pull yourself together

Lucas: I'm at ur door

Lucas: Let me in!

Dustin: I'd knock first

Dustin: Don't want to see something you can't un-see

Will: hahaha

*Shut the fuck up Dustin.
I'm coming right now*

Lucas: WHOA

Dustin: TOO MUCH INFORMATION DUDE

Will: HAHAAHAHA

Mike runs downstairs to open the door for Lucas. He can only shake his head at his friend, who's sporting the biggest smirk on his face.

"Everything all good?" Lucas asks and Mike rolls his eyes before turning to walk into the kitchen. "Awe, come on man. I'm just messing with you."

"Yeah, yeah." Mike shakes his head. "Want a water?"

"Yeah." Lucas nods, taking the water bottle that Mike hands him from the fridge. "Thanks!"

"Sure." Mike nods as he turns to grab himself one and then jumps on top of the kitchen counter. "So, is Max already at the party?"

"Yeah." Lucas answers, taking a seat at the kitchen table. "I think she's already annoyed with most of the people there."

"I don't doubt it." Mike laughs. "She's probably ready to have you there so she can actually have someone she likes not be around."

"Pretty much." Lucas laughs with a big smile on his face. "Oh and I meant to ask earlier. Would it be cool if Max stays here tonight too? Her parents are out of town and it's just Billy at the house, so she doesn't want be there."

"Yeah, no that's fine." Mike tells him, understanding the unpleasantry she deals with when it's just her and her brother home.

"Cool." Lucas smiles. "Thanks man."

"Yeah." Mike nods. "Just no having sex in the house. I don't need to worry about hearing or seeing anything from you guys."

"No worries." Lucas laughs, causing Mike to laugh as well. "We'll behave."

"Good." Mike nods in content.

"And if we really can't contain ourselves, we'll go outside." Lucas

says with the biggest smirk on his face, causing Mike to choke on his water.

“Dude.” Mike shakes his head and Lucas can’t help but laugh even harder.

Before Lucas can even respond to carry on the conversation, there’s a knock at the front door. Before either boy can move, they hear it open and a familiar voice.

“Honey, I’m home!” Dustin calls out as he and Will walk inside.

“We’re in the kitchen.” Mike calls from on top of the counter.

“Whoa.” Dustin says as he turns the corner to look at the boys, noticing Mike without a shirt on. “You two have fun waiting for us?”

“Wha...?” Mike says before shaking his head and realizing he was still shirtless. “Shut up!”

“I hate you sometimes dude.” Lucas adds on, not thrilled about his joke.

“If Max found out, she’d probably kill you.” Dustin laughs.

“Balls would definitely be cut off.” Will says and all three boys turn to look at him, surprised by his comment, before breaking out into hysterics.

“Damn Will.” Dustin laughs, turning to high-five him. “Good shit!”

“I can’t even say anything to rebuke that.” Lucas laughs. “It’s not true, but that was good.”

“Alright, will you two stop fucking around, literally.” Dustin winks, causing Mike to throw a towel, that was lying besides him, at Dustin. “And get ready so we can go?”

“Yeah, I just have to throw a shirt on.” Mike nods as he hops down to his feet and hurries upstairs.

As Mike walks up the stairs to his room, he can hear his friends

talking about something. He quickly looks in his closet, and after looking at a few different options, he decides to just go with a charcoal long-sleeve Henley shirt.

He douses a few sprays of his cologne, one that makes all guys smell like heaven. I mean, you all know what I'm talking about. The spray that you can't really describe but when you hug a guy and take a deep breath, you are just so intoxicated with that heavenly, citrusy, woody, scent.

He runs a brush through his shaggy/curlyish hair and decides that he looks fine. He grabs some gum from his bedside table to pop into his mouth, along with his wallet, a jacket, and keys. As he's heading back downstairs, he hears the group arguing about something new.

"Ready to go?" Mike asks as he interrupts their argument, hoping that it would end it.

"Yeah." Lucas nods as he gets up from the chair that he was sitting on.

"First." Dustin says standing up and reaching into his drawstring bag that's sitting on the table. "A drink!"

"Seriously?" Will asks. "You weren't kidding."

"Of course I wasn't." Dustin shakes his head as he pulls out the bottle of Fireball Whiskey to hand over. "One sip and then we can head out."

"I'm down." Lucas nods and takes the bottle from his friend, unscrewing the top, and takes a sip. "Ugh. I still don't like cinnamon."

"Who does?" Dustin asks as Lucas hands the bottle over to Will, who looks hesitant to drink. "Come on, Will. Take a sip man. You may need some liquid courage to talk to Jaden."

"I, uh." Will starts but Mike looks at him.

"You don't have to drink if you don't want to." Mike says sincerely, making sure he knows that he doesn't have to be forced to have any.

"I know." Will smiles before taking a big sip, much bigger than Lucas'.

"Damn Will!" Lucas says with surprise. "Putting me to shame."

"I like cinnamon." Will says, causing the boys to laugh.

"Obviously." Dustin nods, taking the bottle from his friend and taking a sip. "Mhm... love the burn. Want any Mike?"

"No, I'm good." Mike shakes his head. "I'm driving."

"But you'll drink at the party, right?" Will asks his taller friend.

"I may have a beer but if I'm driving, I don't want to drink much." Mike says responsibly and the boys all nod.

"Cool." Dustin says, taking another drink from the bottle. "Anybody else want more?"

"I'm good." Will shakes his head and Dustin turns to look at Lucas.

"Yeah." Lucas nods, taking the bottle to drink before handing it back to Dustin.

"Good one." Dustin says in enlightenment at the gulp his friend just took. "Alright, let's go."

The group heads out the door to pile into Mike's jeep. Dustin, much to Mike's dismay, packs the bottle of Fireball in his bag for the ride because he knows he's going to want to drink some more at the house.

After an easy 15-minute drive across town to more of the country outskirts, they arrive to the house. Max wasn't joking when she said that it would probably be packed because Tayler was popular. There are people all over the place, including the front.

"Damn, this place is packed." Dustin says as they get out of the car after Mike parks it down the street.

"Seriously." Will nods as he gathers himself after getting out of the

back seat. "I can only imagine what it's going to be like inside."

"Seriously." Mike breathes out, not really one to be a fan of crowded spaces.

They get to the front door, expecting someone to be there to collect their money, but there was nobody. Lucas had already texted Max on the drive over to tell her that they were on their way, so it was no surprise to any of them when she popped up in front of them as soon as they walked in.

"Finally!" Max breathes out as she wraps her arms around Lucas' neck and leans in for a kiss. "I was wondering when you would get here, stalker."

"Yeah, we were waiting for Mike to finish getting ready." Lucas answers as he pulls away from the kiss. "You look beautiful."

"Thanks." Max smiles and pulls away from the hug to look at him. "You taste like cinnamon."

"Oh, yeah." Lucas laughs before answering. "We took a couple shots before coming here of Fireball."

"I'm jealous." Max says and Dustin reaches into his bag to pull out the bottle.

"Want a sip?" Dustin offers and Max smiles widely.

"Hell yeah, thank you." Max says kindly as she takes the cap off to take a drink. "I love it."

"Me too." Will smiles. "Oh, here's the money. We didn't know who we should give it to."

"No, keep it." Max shakes her head and hands the bottle back to Dustin. "We had some many people come and chip in their own alcohol that it's already been paid for; plus, we actually made money back from everyone. So you guys don't have to worry about paying."

"Awesome!" Lucas smiles at the news. "Well how about I go get us a drink."

“Yeah.” Max nods with a smile. “A beer for me, please.”

“Okay, I can do that.” Lucas nods and turns to look at the rest of the group. “Anyone want anything?”

“I’m okay.” Will shakes his head.

“I’ll come with you.” Dustin answers and turns to look at Mike. “Want anything?”

“I’m good for now.” Mike shakes his head. “I’ll grab something in a little.”

“Okay, we’ll be back.” Dustin says and turns to follow Lucas into the kitchen where all of the alcohol was being stored.

“This place is crazy.” Will says, having to almost shout over all of the noise and music for his friends to hear him.

“I told you!” Max nods and smiles when she realizes something from earlier. “Oh Will, Jaden’s here. And I must admit, he’s look mighty fine for someone who likes guys.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Will asks with a laugh.

“I don’t know.” Max shakes her head. “He looks hot. You should go find him!”

“Really?” Will asks, looking around the room to see if he can find him.

“Yeah.” Max nods and turns to look at Mike. “What’s up, Frog face? You looking for a girl tonight? I can find someone to hook you up with.”

“I’m good.” Mike shakes his head.

“What?” Max asks with wonder. “Not too keen on any of these Hawkins girls, huh?”

“I don’t know.” Mike shrugs as he looks around and notices a familiar face, one that makes his eyes light up.

“What are you...? Oh.” Max smiles as she follows where his eyes are looking because she caught the change in demeanor. “That’s Jane Hopper. She’s the chief’s daughter.”

“Hopper? Chief Hopper has a daughter?” Mike asks with confusion. “Since when?”

“I guess she was mostly living with her mother when they divorced and only came during summers.” Max explains. “But when her mother died a few years ago, she moved here with him. She was homeschooled the last couple years but wanted to go to school for her senior year.”

“How do you know all this?” Will asks with wonder.

“Girls talk, you know.” Max says and Will nods.

“Apparently.” The younger boy laughs. “She apparently also caught the attention of Mike.”

“I met her.” Mike says and both Max and Will look at him.

“When?” Will asks his friend.

“Today.” Mike recalls. “At Tony’s Burger House. I was buying lunch and she was in there. We talked for a moment.”

“What’d she say to you?” Will asks for details.

“She, uh... she got mad at me, kind of.” Mike says with a small laugh.

“What the hell?” Max says. “Why?”

“I helped pay for her lunch and she got mad that I did it.” Mike explains. “Then got mad that I wouldn’t take the change back that was leftover.”

“Uh, okay?” Max shakes her head. “That’s an interesting thing to get mad at someone over.”

“I don’t think she was like, really mad.” Mike laughs, still unable to pull his eyes away from her. “I think she just didn’t want to seem

incapable of paying for her own stuff.”

“Makes sense.” Will says and Max turns to look at him as if asking if he really means that and Will simply shrugs, not really understanding but decided to say that so Mike wouldn’t be annoyed.

“I have her in a couple classes this year.” Max says, causing Mike to look at her. “She’s really nice. Definitely one of the more popular girls around school.”

“Who’s popular?” Lucas asks as he and Dustin return with their drinks.

“A girl that Mike met earlier.” Will answers to the surprise of the other boys.

“What?” Dustin asks and looks at Mike. “Who is it?”

“Jane Hopper.” Max answers and Dustin looks at her with wonder.

“Chief Hopper’s daughter?” Dustin asks and Max nods.

“You knew Chief had a daughter?” Mike turns to ask him and Dustin nods.

“Uh yeah.” Lucas ends up answering. “Most people do.”

“I didn’t.” Mike says and Max laughs.

“Clearly.” She says with sarcasm before turning to take the beer from Lucas. “Thank you!”

“No problem.” Lucas smiles. “So you going to go over and talk to her or just stare at her like a creeper?”

“Coming from the stalker himself.” Max says with a sassy smirk.

“No, I don’t know her.” Mike shakes his head. “She’s busy with her friends anyways.”

“Okay, now that’s out of the way.” Dustin says after taking a sip of his drink. “I saw that there are some beer pong tables set up outside,

and I think they're calling our names. How about we go win some games, huh?"

"Yeah." Lucas says with Max nodding along.

"Maybe Jaden's out there." Will smiles. "I'm in. Mike?"

"Yeah." Mike nods. "Sure, why not."

The group all head outside, to no surprise, another big crowd of people. They run into the birthday girl Tayler and say hi and happy birthday, before getting to a table. Waiting for a few of the games to end, they talk with some of their classmates, drinking and laughing, before it was their turn.

Lucas and Dustin partner up first to play the winners that were already at the table. About 15 minutes later, the boys have become victorious and get to keep the table for another group to join. It just so happens that as they were waiting and watching the games, Will was able to catch up with Jaden.

He stayed and talked with the group of friends, mainly Will, and offered to be Will's partner for the game. So they were the next two to challenge the boys when the table was free.

Max went to go grab a couple more beers for the boys, so they can drink during the game, at the sincere pleading of Lucas. So as they waited, Dustin broke out his bottle of Fireball so they could take more shots. It was safe to say the group was progressively getting less and less sober every other minute.

When Max returns, Dustin offers her the bottle as a reward for getting them so beers. She gladly accepts it with a few gulps. Lucas looks at her with surprise and she simply smiles and tells him it tastes like water to her now; so everyone knew she was soon to be plastered.

As time passes by, Mike still hasn't gotten himself a drink or even taken a drink of alcohol yet. Though as he watches, he's getting hounded by his friends to go make himself something to drink. He gives in more because he's actually sort of thirsty and would like to stop hearing Dustin call him a pussy for not having a cup in his hand.

He tells them that he'll be back as he heads inside to see his options. He's stopped every other person it seems as they want to talk and say hi. Mike, who's not really the social one as it is, tries to be nice but really doesn't feel like standing in a circle of non-sober people.

After a good 20 minutes of weaving in and out of the crowd, he finally makes his way to the kitchen. Before he can walk through the doors to where all of the alcohol was stored, he hears a familiar voice that catches his attention; mainly because of the distressed tone of it.

"Um, hi." Jane says as she's blocked from walking by a body in front of her.

"You're Jane, right?" A boy's voice asks and she nods. "The Chief's daughter?"

"Yeah." She nods at him. "Is there something that I can help you with?"

"No, I just saw that you were making your way over here to refill your cup and I decided to be a gentleman and make one for you." He smiles as he holds out the cup for her to take.

"Oh, thanks." Jane says hesitantly but takes the cup.

"It's the least I can do for the Chief's daughter." He smiles as he takes a drink of his own cup. "I'm Marcus."

"Nice to meet you Marcus." Jane says, shaking his hand that he offers out. "I'm Jane, but you already knew that."

"The pleasure is all mine." Marcus smiles at her. "I've seen you around school a few times. What's your story?"

"My story?" Jane asks with confusion.

"Yeah." He nods, taking another drink from his cup. "You know, your story of why you came here to little ole Hawkins? Heard your mom died and that's why."

"There's not much to my story." Jane says bluntly, a little annoyed at the guy's lack of feelings.

"I doubt that." Marcus shakes his head. "Having a mom die seems to lead to some pretty crazy stories to be told. What'd she die from?"

"I'd rather not talk about it." Jane says, now completely irritated by the lack of respect for a subject so sensitive.

"Oh come on. Just tell it." He continues but Jane just looks at him with disbelief. "What's the matter? You haven't had any of your drink yet. You don't like your beer?"

"Oh, well no, it's just..." Jane begins to explain but is cut off when someone walks up next to her and intervenes.

"There you are. I've been looking everywhere for you." Mike says with a smile on his face. "The group was wondering where you were. It's our turn on the beer pong table."

"Um, what?" Jane asks, completely confused at what he's saying to her, realizing that it's the boy from earlier.

"It's our turn on the table. They're waiting for us, but I told them that you had just went off to grab a few drinks for the group." Mike continues, looking at her more intently, hoping that she catches on.

"Oh, oh." Jane says after getting his meaning. "Yeah, I was but Marcus here stopped to talk for a second. I still need to grab the other drinks."

"I'll help you." Mike offers and Jane smiles and nods before turning to look at the other boy.

"Sorry, I have to get back to my friends." Jane tells him. "It was, uh, nice to meet you Marcus."

"You too." Marcus smiles. "Don't worry, I'll make my way over to you again before the night ends. Try not to drink too much without me."

"Yeah, we'll try not to." Mike mumbles as he pushes the girl ahead through the kitchen doors, leaving the guy standing there all by himself.

Jane is fully through the doors of the kitchen, with Mike right behind her, before turning around to look at him. Once they make eye contact, they both break out into laughter. Jane, finally able to gather herself is the first to speak.

"Thanks for that." Jane breathes out. "But I have no idea what friends you are talking about."

"No, I know." Mike shakes his head. "I was just trying to give you an out, so you didn't have to continue that awful and pointless conversation with him."

"Oh, you didn't need to do that." Jane tells him. "I can take care of myself and I was about to tell him that I wasn't interested in talking to him."

"I know you can, you little firecracker." Mike laughs as he leans against the counter. "I just thought it'd be easier if I said something, that way he wouldn't try to continue or protest."

"I would have been just fine, thank you." Jane says matter of factly. "I didn't need and out, even though that's what it seemed like when you were eavesdropping on my conversation."

"Okay, my bad." Mike says in defeat. "Sorry, I was just trying to help."

"No." Jane shakes her head, feeling guilty for being rude. "You're right. I'm sorry, you did help. Thank you for that."

"Anytime." Mike smiles, relaxing for a second before reaching out and to take Jane's cup to pour it down the sink. "Haven't you ever heard that you should never accept a drink from someone at a party if they make it for you without you watching?"

"I wasn't going to drink it." Jane laughs, shaking her head. "I was just accepting it to be nice."

"Uh huh, sure." Mike halfheartedly accepts, as he grabs a fresh new cup for her. "What are you drinking tonight?"

"Uh, I just had some beer." She shrugs.

"Oh, so you're a beer girl, huh?" Mike turns to ask the girl and she shakes her head.

"No. I mean, not really." Jane begins to explain. "It was something that was easy to grab right in that moment."

"Okay." Mike nods his head. "So what do you want to drink now?"

"I'm not sure." Jane shakes her head. "What are you drinking? I'll have whatever you have."

"Okay, I'll make you a Mike special." Mike smiles as he looks around the kitchen to see what all was there.

"And what's a Mike special?" Jane smirks, leaning against the countertop. "And I'm taking it that your name is Mike, huh?"

"Oh, yeah. Right. I'm Mike, Mike Wheeler." Mike smiles, offering out his hand for Jane to take, which she does. "And since you're so indecisive of what you want to drink, I'll give you something that I know you'll enjoy. Trust me!"

"Whatever you say Mike." Jane smiles as she watches him make her drink. "I'm Jane Hopper, by the way."

Jane sits there for a few minutes as Mike constructs this drink for her. The girl wonders what all he is planning on using, but she doesn't seem too worried about it. Instead, she focuses more on him.

Noticing how tall and lanky he is, she bets he's at least 6 feet. He looks thin, but not boney thin. Lean with muscles, for sure. His hair is curly and his skin is much lighter than she believes it normally is; probably with the fact that it's February in Indiana has something to do with the lack of tan.

She can't help but smile at how concentrated he seems to be as he makes this drink for her. The jawline and his bone structure makes her feel some type a way inside, not knowing why it has such an affect on her. As she tries to think about it, Mike is now turned around, staring at her with a questioning look on his face.

"Uh, Jane?" Mike asks, trying to get the girl's attention.

“Huh?” Jane says, noticing he’s staring at her. “What?”

“It’s finished.” He laughs as he hands the cup over to her.

“Thanks.” She accepts the cup. “What’s in it?”

“You’ll have to try it and let me know what you think.” Mike says, jumping on top of the counter to watch her.

“You were literally just scolding me for accepting a drink from someone else when they made it for me.” Jane reiterates. “How can I trust that this drink is okay and that I should make an exception for you?”

“Touché, Jane.” Mike laughs with a smile on his face, one that Jane can’t help but smile at. “But I can promise you that it’s okay to drink. It’s safe.”

“Hmm, I don’t know.” Jane smirks. “I feel like that’s what they all say before someone tries to poison you with something they made.”

“Oh, whatever.” Mike shakes his head. “Want me to take a drink first to show you that it’s okay?”

“Yeah, please.” Jane nods, handing the cup over to him.

“You don’t have any disease or sicknesses, right?” Mike asks, and it catches Jane by surprise.

“Excuse me?” Jane questions with shock.

“I’m just making sure you don’t have any Coulrophobia disease or anything.” Mike says and Jane looks at him for a brief second.

“The fear of clowns?” Jane asks and Mike can’t help but laugh.

“You actually know what that is and the name of it?” Mike asks with amazement.

“Well, yeah.” Jane laughs. “It’s not something that can be passed on or contagious.”

“Hey, you never know.” Mike teases with a big smile.

“Well, no, I don’t have that disease.” Jane answers honestly. “Or any other for the matter. Do you?”

“No ma’am.” Mike shakes his head proudly. “I’m clean as a whistle.”

“Promise?” Jane asks and Mike looks at her for a second before nodding.

“Promise.” Mike smiles. “Friends don’t lie.”

“Friends don’t lie?” Jane repeats with a smile. “I like that.”

“It’s our rule.” Mike explains. “My group of friends and I. We don’t lie to each other, no matter what.”

“That’s a good rule to have.” Jane says sincerely.

“Yeah.” Mike nods before looking down at the cup. “Well, here you go. See, nothing bad at all.”

“Okay, it may not be poisonous.” Jane states, taking the cup from Mike after he takes his drink. “But that doesn’t mean it doesn’t taste terrible.”

“Would you just shut up and try it.” Mike scoffs with a playful headshake.

“Okay, okay.” Jane gives in and takes a drink from the cup. “Oh, wow. This is actually pretty good.”

“Told you.” Mike says with a satisfied grin on his face.

“Whatever.” Jane playfully rolls her eyes. “What’s in it?”

“Ahh, now that’s a secret.” Mike shakes his head. “Only special people get to know the recipe of the Mike special.”

“Seriously?” Jane laughs, and Mike simply nods his head in response. “Fine.”

The two stay there in a comfortable silence for a dew moments. Jane

takes another drink from her cup as she watches Mike grab a water for himself. She looks at him curiously for a brief second.

“Are you not drinking tonight?” Jane asks.

“No.” Mike shakes his head. “I don’t really drink. Not a big fan of it. Plus, I’m also the DD for the night.”

“What, really?” Jane asks surprised. “Why didn’t you tell me? And why did you drink some from the cup if you don’t really drink?”

“Because I needed to prove to you that it was okay to drink it.” Mike simply says.

“I would have believed you if you just said it was okay and then refused to drink it because you don’t really drink.” Jane laughs. “I wouldn’t make you drink just to prove a point.”

“It’s not a big deal.” Mike shrugs his shoulders. “It got you to trust me and to take a drink. I count that as a win.”

“You’re ridiculous.” Jane laughs, taking another drink from the cup.

The two of them stay there in the kitchen for another 20 or so minutes, just laughing and talking. Not really getting into too many deep topics, but just talking about school and senior year really. Jane telling him that it’s much better than being homeschooled and what not. Both sharing stories, laughing and smiling until it hurts.

Not too long though, a few people walk in to make themselves some drinks and the both of them know they should probably head back out to the party. Mike hops off the counter, moving to help Jane down from when she got up onto the other counter by herself earlier in their conversation.

“Thank you.” Jane smiles as he helps her down with ease.

“Don’t worry about it.” Mike smiles. “Sorry for keeping you from your friends.”

“That’s not a problem at all.” Jane shakes her head. “Most of them are pretty intoxicated, so you saved me from dealing with that.”

“Oh, okay.” Mike says and Jane nods her head. “Well, I guess we should get back out there.”

“Yeah.” Jane nods in agreement. “It was nice talking with you, Mike Wheeler.”

“You too Jane Hopper.” Mike smiles, shaking the extended hand she offers. “Maybe we’ll talk again soon.”

“I’d like that.” Jane smiles, causing Mike to smile. “Well, bye Mike.”

“Bye Jane.” Mike waves as the girl turns to exit the kitchen.

He stays in there for another minute or so, gathering himself from the great moment he just had with her. Between earlier at the burger joint to right here in the kitchen, he just can’t help but be infatuated with her.

After one more deep breath, Mike walks out the kitchen. His initial look around the room, he doesn’t see her and that disappoints him for a brief second but he also knows that he has no reason to be. He quickly makes his way outside to where his friends are, still on the beer pong table.

No one even really noticed that he was gone for so long since they were enjoying their game and the party so much. He watches as his friends continue their games, laughing and enjoying every minute of it. He ends up joining in on the fun and games, partnering with Max and doing much better than her; maybe because he was completely sober unlike the rest of them.

After another hour or two, the group seems about ready to go home. All are basically smashed, besides Mike of course and it just seems like the right time to leave. They’ve joined in singing to the birthday girl, so there’s nothing else really keeping them there.

“You guys ready?” Mike asks the group after Dustin and Lucas lose their last game.

“Yeah.” Dustin slurs out. “Fuck this game.”

“Yeah.” Lucas says, with an arm wrapped around Max’s shoulders.

“Let’s go home and get some pizza.”

“I’m so okay with that.” Max smiles in agreement. “You in, Byers?”

“Definitely.” Will nods and looks at Mike. “You okay to drive?”

“Yeah, I’m good.” Mike tells them. “Let’s go.”

They make their way through the crowd outside to get inside the house. There are still so many people there, that it’s ridiculous. Mike is having a hell of a time trying to keep his group together to make it through the front door. It’s never easy dealing with people not sober.

“Mike!” Max calls out, causing Mike to stop and turn to look at her. “Isn’t that your girl over there.”

“What?” Mike asks, looking at her with bewilderment.

“Burger girl.” Will points to where Max was looking.

“Oh.” Mike follows where the two of them are looking and sees that she’s there talking with friends.

“You should go talk to her.” Will urges and Mike shakes his head.

“No way.” Mike rejects. “I’m not going to bother her again.”

“Dude, come on.” Dustin groans. “Go talk to her. She may like your idiot self.”

“Shut up, Dustin.” Mike scoffs at his friend before turning to look back at Jane, who is talking to that Marcus guy again. “She obviously seems busy.”

“I may be highly intoxicated.” Max hiccups. “But I know the look of a girl who wants to be anywhere other than where she is, and her face says it all talking to that guy. She wants nothing to do with him.”

“Yeah.” Will nods his head in agreement. “Go help her again.”

“She doesn’t need my help.” Mike shakes his head as they all watch the conversation happening 10 feet away from them; just as Mike is

about to tell them to come on, they see that Marcus guy spill his drink all over Jane's shirt.

"Whoa!" Dustin breathes out. "Am I seeing things, or did he just drench her?"

"She looks pissed." Lucas says and Max nods.

"I'd be pissed too." Max says as they continue to watch. "Especially with his hands all over me like that."

"Mike, you sho..." Will begins but before they knew it, Mike wasn't next to them anymore.

Before anyone could say anything more to him, Mike has had enough. Making his way to where they were, there was an annoyed look on his face. It's only a matter of seconds before Mike is right there with them.

"Oh my god!" Jane groans out. "I can't believe you just did that."

"Whoops." Marcus breathes out. "My bad."

"Your bad?" Jane looks at him with anger. "Are you kidding me?"

"Look at it this way." Marcus says with a mischievous smile. "We know who's winning the wet t-shirt contest tonight."

"You are ridiculous." Jane says, more annoyed than she thought she could ever be.

"Come on, babe." Marcus says, pulling her closer to him by her waist. "I can take you home and clean you up really nice."

"Yeah, definitely not." Mike speaks up as he walks in between the two of them. "We were heading home actually."

"Dude, come on." Marcus groans. "Stop being a cockblock. Let her speak for herself without you deciding things for her."

"You already ruined her shirt and probably and night." Mike says, shielding Jane behind him. "I'm not going to let her waste another

second having to deal with you.”

“You don’t know what she wants.” Marcus says, getting into Mike’s face. “So why don’t you go on home and I’ll take care of your little friend here.”

“Yeah, that’s not happening.” Mike protests. “My ‘little friend’ here deserves more respect than some drunken idiot at a party. So how about you apologize for ruining her shirt, and night, and then we will be on our way. You can enjoy the rest of your night hitting on some other girl.”

“Apologize? I didn’t do anything.” Marcus tells him. “It’s not my fault she was all over me and spilled some of my drink on her. She shouldn’t have been so close.”

“You have got to be kidding me.” Jane says with anger, gaining the attention of everyone around her. “You were the one who wouldn’t leave me alone.”

“Whatever you say.” Marcus laughs out. “Why don’t you go tell mommy on me.”

“You fuc...” Jane begins to say, trying to get around Mike to get in his face, but Mike prevents that.

“Dude, you want to be the asshole that has absolutely no respect for others, go right ahead.” Mike says, sticking up for Jane. “But we are going to get out of here and end whatever the hell this pointless interaction is.”

“Whatever you say.” Marcus says to him before looking at Jane. “Bye baby Hopper. See you around.”

“Definitely not.” Jane says back as Mike walks her towards the front door to leave the house.

“Are you okay?” Mike asks as they make it outside of the house. “I didn’t mean to bother you again. I just saw him spill his drink on you and then had his hands around you and I just felt like you needed some help.”

“Yeah, I’m fine.” Jane shakes her head, still annoyed about what just happened. “Thank you for helping with things.”

“No problem at all.” Mike says.

“Whoa dude, you okay?” Dustin asks as the group makes it out to them. “We saw Marcus get in your face.”

“Yeah, we were about to come over for some back up.” Lucas says, barely keeping his balance.

“You would have been a lot of help.” Mike says, laughing at his friends and their non-sober state.

“I now see why you’re the DD.” Jane laughs, looking at Mike’s friends before turning to look back at him. “Good choice.”

“Are you okay?” Will asks Jane gently. “He looked like a complete asshole.”

“Yeah, I’m fine.” Jane nods. “I was lucky to have Mike come help me again because he was getting too much to handle.”

“Yeah, Frog face can be useful sometimes.” Max says, causing Mike to roll his eyes at the stupid nickname. “Prime example: Taking us back to his place.”

“His place?” Jane repeats and looks at Mike.

“Yeah, they’re staying at my place.” Mike explains. “My parents are out of town for the weekend, so I have the house to myself.”

“I see.” Jane laughs. “Well don’t let me keep you from taking them home. I should get back to my friends too.”

“Who are you looking for?” Dustin asks her.

“Jaimie and Krista.” Jane answers. “Krista’s giving me a ride home.”

“Krista Johnson?” Will asks and she nods. “I don’t think you’ll be wanting to get in a car with her.”

“Why?” Jane asks with confusion and Will points behind her, where she can see Krista taking shots through the outside window. “Oh, shoot. She was supposed to be my ride. I can’t call my dad, he’d kill me if he knew I was out drinking with people.”

“You can come with us.” Will offers, much to the surprise of Mike. “Mike can drive you home!”

“Oh no, I couldn’t do that to you guys.” Jane shakes her head. “You guys don’t need to worry about me.”

“No, it’s okay.” Max answers next to assure her. “We can definitely give you a ride home, right Mike?”

“Uh, yeah.” Mike barely manages to say, nervous that he may get to be in a car with this amazing girl soon.

“I don’t want to be a bother.” Jane says to him. “I live out on the outskirts of town. Our cabin isn’t the closest place from here.”

“That’s okay.” Mike assures her. “I don’t mind at all.”

“You sure?” Jane asks and Mike nods his head.

“Friends don’t lie, remember.” He smiles and Jane can feel a small smile forming on her face.

“Okay, if you’re sure.” Jane gives in and Mike nods. “I’m going to go tell my friends that I have a ride home and not to worry about me.”

“Okay, I’ll go get the car and meet you right here in front.” Mike tells her and she nods in acknowledgment before heading inside to go say bye to her friends.

The group quickly makes their way to Mike’s jeep, mainly because Mike was hurrying them over. Dustin was about to jump in the front passenger’s seat, but Mike stops him and tells him to get in the back.

Dustin tries to protest but Mike simply tells him that it wouldn’t be fair to make Jane sit in the back with people she barely knows, who are also pretty drunk. He nods his head, understanding Mike’s reasoning, and jumps in back to squeeze in next to Will and Lucas as

Max in halfway on Lucas' lap.

Mike drives over to the front of the house and parks so they can wait for Jane. He can see through the window that she is explaining things to her friends. After a few seconds of talking, Jane waves goodbye and hurries out to the front, where she sees Mike and hops into the front seat.

"Thanks so much again." Jane says as she buckles her seatbelt.

"It's no problem at all." Mike says instantly. "We were planning on picking up some pizza to eat back at my house. Would it be cool if we head there so I can drop everyone off, and then head to take you home?"

"Yeah, that's completely fine." Jane nods. "Whatever is easiest for you."

"Okay, cool." Mike smiles and looks in the rearview mirror to his friends in the back. "Call and order the pizza so we can just pick it up when we get there."

"Roger that." Lucas nods as he takes out his phone, but has difficulty focusing on the bright light, so Max takes it from him.

"What kind do we want?" Max asks the group.

"Pepperoni." Will says with a smile.

"Meat Lovers." Dustin suggests, and he hums at the sound of pizza and how amazing it's going to be.

"What about you Lucas?" Max asks her boyfriend.

"I'm good with Meat Lovers." Lucas half smiles, still pretty buzzed.

"What kind would you like?" Mike asks Jane gently.

"Oh, really?" Jane asks with surprise and Mike nods his head. "I'm okay with Pepperoni."

"Okay, so one large Meat Lovers and a large Pepperoni?" Max asks

and the group all nod and say yes. “Okay, I’m ordering right now.”

Max orders and the group drives the 10 minutes to the pizza place. Luckily there’s a drive through because Mike was not in the mood to get out of the car, especially leaving his drunk friends in there alone.

He pulls up to the window and hands over a \$20, with his friends thanking him for paying. He hands the pizzas over to Jane, so she can hold them for the rest of the drive to his house; she accepts them with a smile.

As soon as they pull up to Mike’s house, the group in the back pile out of the car. Still fairly intoxicated, the struggle to stay quiet in the late hours, making Mike worry that his neighbors would be upset and complain about the noise.

He quickly unlocks the front door so they can all head inside. He waits for them to pile in and turns to look at Jane as she carries the pizzas inside contently. He follows behind her and shows her to the kitchen table so she can put the pizza down.

“YASS!! Dustin groans as he takes a bite of the Meat Lovers pizza.

“Seriously heaven.” Will hums after taking a bite of his own piece.

“Have as much as you’d like.” Mike tells Jane kindly. “There’s plenty. I promise.”

“Okay, thank you.” Jane smiles gratefully and reaches to grab a piece of pepperoni.

“So Jane, how do you like Hawkins High?” Max asks as she takes a seat at the table across from Jane. “Is it better than being homeschooled?”

“Uh, yeah.” Jane nods. “Less lonely, that’s for sure.”

“I bet.” Dustin says with food in his mouth. “You seem too normal to be homeschooled.”

“Dustin!” Mike shouts at his friend before turning to look at Jane to apologize. “I’m sorry, that’s Dustin. He doesn’t really ever think

before he talks.”

“Or think in general.” Lucas says, receiving a glare from the curly haired boy. “I’m Lucas, and this is my girlfriend, Max.”

“Yeah, we have a few classes together, right?” Jane asks and Max nods proudly.

“Yeah.” Max smiles. “I think you’re too smart to be in my classes though.”

“They think that since I was homeschooled that I can’t keep up with the advanced classes.” Jane explains.

“Well they were obviously wrong.” Will says, causing Jane to smile at his kindness. “I’m Will Byers.”

“Hi, Will.” Jane smiles widely. “My dad is friends with your mom, I believe.”

“Oh yeah.” Will nods his head. “Hopper and my mom went to school together and hung out with the same friends in school I think.”

“That’s really cool.” Jane smiles, hearing some information about her dad.

“So Jane, let me ask you something.” Max says and Mike instantly feels nervous about what she’s about to say. “What do you see in that Marcus guy?”

“Oh no, we aren’t together or anything.” Jane instantly denies. “He just approached me at the party and wouldn’t leave me alone. I don’t really know who he is.”

“You don’t know the quarterback of the football team?” Lucas asks and Jane shakes her head.

“Not really.” Jane answers honestly. “I don’t really like watching football.”

“What?” Dustin asks with surprise. “How do you not like football?”

"I don't know." Jane simply shrugs.

"Don't worry, I don't really like it either." Will leans in to tell her, making her feel more comfortable.

"Football is pretty great." Dustin hums out.

"Not our team." Mike says and it causes Jane to smile. "So no wonder why she doesn't like it."

"Not denying that." Dustin laughs as he thinks about how terrible their school's football team is.

"Well Mike, you may need to be careful at school when we get back." Lucas says intently. "Marcus didn't seem too happy that you took Jane away from him."

"I didn't take anything away from him." Mike answers honestly. "I just didn't think that he should be disrespecting her the way he was."

"Good job buddy." Dustin raises his pizza to his friend as some sort of toast of appreciation.

"Yeah." Mike simply shrugs and turns to look at Jane, who's smiling to herself as she eats another slice of pizza.

The group hangs around the kitchen, Mike hanging them all some water and sodas to drink while they continued to eat the pizza. Jane, who literally knew none of these people really just a few hours ago, can't catch her breath because she's been laughing so hard.

They all are having a great time talking and joking. Mainly Dustin telling some of his most ridiculous stories, and no one other than the group has ever heard of them. So Jane is absolutely dying of laughter from hearing all of their ridiculous antics that they have done and experienced.

"Oh my." Jane gasps when she looks at her phone after receiving a text from her father. "It's almost 1 in the morning."

"Yeah." Max nods. "Is that a problem?"

"I told my dad that I'd be home by 1." Jane says as she answers his text.

"Oh is he home asking where you are?" Will questions and Jane shakes her head.

"No, he's not home." Jane begins to explain. "He's working and won't be home until the morning. I just forgot that I was supposed to text him when I got home."

"Well you can just text and tell him that you're home now, right?" Dustin asks as he looks at Jane.

"Yeah, I did." Jane informs him. "But knowing him, he may try to come check on me since I was late in texting him. He probably knows that I'm not home yet."

"Well how about we get you home then?" Mike suggests, even though he doesn't want her to leave. "I don't want you to get in trouble because we asked you to come have pizza with us."

"Yeah." Jane nods. "That would probably be a good idea."

"No, don't go." Max whines as Jane stands up. "We like you. It's nice to have another girl around too. These boys can get pretty annoying."

"Look who's talking." Dustin scoffs, stuffing his face with another piece of pizza.

"See what I mean?" Max turns to ask Jane, who can only smile back. "You should stay!"

"Yeah." Lucas agrees with his girlfriend. "We are fun."

"Oh my god." Mike groans, shaking his head at how embarrassing his friends are. "Guys, she has to get home."

"Buy why?" Dustin asks.

"We can't let her get in trouble by Hopper because we didn't want her to leave." Mike explains and they nod in understanding.

“True that.” Lucas says, taking another slice to eat.

“You’ll come back to visit us soon though, right?” Will asks her and Jane can feel her heart swell at how sweet he is; she also knows that all of them are pretty much saying whatever because they aren’t sober and can’t control anything.

“Yeah.” Jane tells him, causing a big smile to appear on his face. “Of course.”

“Good.” Will says and hugs her tight, almost tripping over the chair when he tries to sit back down.

“It was really nice meeting you guys!” Jane says as she was making her way out of the kitchen to follow Mike outside. “I had a great time with you all.”

“You too!” Dustin says. “Even though you don’t like football, you’re still pretty cool.”

“Oh Dustin.” Max shakes her head. “You’re an idiot.”

“No, you are.” Dustin fires back.

“Wow, good one bro.” Lucas teases, causing an empty water bottom to be thrown at him by Dustin.

“Okay, we’re leaving.” Mike says, irritated by the stupidity of his friends. “I’ll be back in a little bit. Don’t destroy my house.”

“No promises.” Dustin calls out.

“Bye guys!” Jane waves to the group.

“BYE!” They all say in unison as the two of them exit the kitchen towards the front door.

“You ready?” Mike asks as he holds the front door open for Jane. “Do you want another shirt to change into so you don’t have to smell like beer any longer?”

“Um, no. I should be okay.” Jane says after thinking for a brief

moment. "Thank you though."

"No problem." Mike shrugs as he gestures for Jane to walk to through the door with him following.

They both make their way to Mike's Jeep and hop in. Mike starts the vehicle and buckles his seatbelt before turning to look at Jane.

"So, where are we heading?" Mike turns to ask her after he pulls the car out of the driveway.

"Uh, I live South of Hawkins on the outskirts." Jane tells him. "If you go down Palmer Street and turn left at County Road 85, then we'll be right near the cabin."

"Oh, you only live like 10 minutes away or so from here." Mike smiles and Jane nods. "I was thinking you were way out like South Harmica or something."

"No, not that far." Jane shakes her head and laughs at Mike's sigh of relief. "But I do live pretty out of town."

"No, you're not too far at all." Mike smiles. "Don't worry, I'll have you there in no time."

"Cool." Jane smiles as Mike puts the vehicle in drive.

The two start the drive in a comfortable silence, besides the music coming from the radio. Mike can't help himself from sneaking glances over at her when she's looking outside the window. He doesn't know how, but he was lucky enough to spend a good amount of time with this beautiful girl that he hasn't stopped thinking about all day.

"Your friends are fun." Jane says out of nowhere after some time, snapping Mike out of his thoughts.

"They're ridiculous." Mike shakes his head. "And obnoxious when they've been drinking. They will literally say anything and everything that comes to their minds."

"I think they're funny." Jane smiles. "I like them."

“Oh.” Mike smiles, acknowledging the fact that she likes his friends.
“Cool.”

“Yeah.” Jane smiles to herself as she looks ahead. “Oh, this is the road.”

“Oh shit.” Mike turns just in time before he misses the turn. “Sorry!”

“It’s okay.” Jane laughs, shaking her head. “It’s just right up the road here.”

“Okay.” Mike nods and continues driving a little bit. “Where at?”

“You can stop right up here to the right.” Jane instructs him and he does as he’s told.

“Right here?” Mike questions, not seeing anything besides trees as he parks his car.

“Yeah.” Jane nods, unbuckling her seatbelt. “Our cabin is just right up the trail right there.”

“How far?” Mike asks.

“About a half mile or so.” Jane says and Mike looks at her with confusion. “What?”

“You’re going to walk up there this late at night?” Mike asks as he looks around and sees literally nothing but darkness and trees.

“Uh, yeah.” Jane shrugs as she hops out of the Jeep. “It’s not my first time doing it.”

“Well let me at least walk you up there, please.” Mike pleads as he hops out of his car too to talk to her. “I wouldn’t feel right driving off until I knew you were safe in your house.”

“It’s not a big deal.” Jane shakes her head. “I do this all the time. You don’t have to worry about me.”

“I know.” Mike nods, knowing that he literally has no reason to worry about her. “But I just don’t want you walking alone through

the woods. Can I please walk you up?"

"You won't leave unless I say yes, will you?" Jane asks him with a smirk and he shakes his head no. "You're hardheaded, you know that?"

"I feel like I've been told that before." Mike smiles widely and Jane can feel her heart beat faster at his amazing smile.

"Fine." Jane gives in. "You can walk me up if it makes you feel better."

"Cool." Mike nods, grabbing his jacket from inside to put on, and then locks his jeep before quickly moving to stand next to Jane so they can walk up together. "Do you have a flashlight?"

"No." Jane shakes her head. "Don't need one. You just need to follow the small narrow path of trees."

"Oh." Mike breathes out as he looks ahead to see that there is in fact a narrow pathway for them to walk up. "Well, after you."

"Thanks." Jane smiles as she leads the way for Mike to follow next to her.

The two of them walk in a content silence for the first few minutes. Both sneaking glances at each other with smiles on their faces. Mike just can't believe how his night has turned out; definitely one that he doesn't want to end. As they continue walking, Mike notices the slightest shiver that Jane lets out.

"Are you cold?" Mike asks her after he sees her shiver again.

"I'm fine." Jane shakes her head but crosses her arms to try to keep herself warm.

"Here." Mike says, causing Jane to stop as he quickly takes his jacket off to hand to her. "This should help keep you warm."

"No, I'm okay." Jane denies at first. "You don't need to worry about me."

“Jane, I can see you shivering.” Mike says with a knowing look. “I’m wearing a long-sleeve and you’re still covered in beer. This will help.”

“Mike, I’m fine.” Jane denies again, rejecting the offered jacket. “We aren’t too far away.”

“Seriously?” Mike shakes his head. “Just take the jacket without fighting me, please.”

“Fine.” Jane gives in and takes the jacket from him. “But I’m fine though.”

“Do you always have to resist when someone does or tries to do something nice for you?” Mike questions and it catches Jane off guard. “I know you can take care of yourself and you don’t need anyone’s help, but that doesn’t mean you can’t accept it every once in a while. Instead of fighting it all, a simple thank you will be much more appreciated and welcomed.”

“I’m sorry.” Jane shakes her head embarrassed. “You’re right. Thank you!”

“See, much better.” Mike smiles widely as he turns to continue walking. “You’re very welcome.”

“You’re right, by the way.” Jane says gently, causing Mike to turn and look at her. “This is very warm.”

“I’m not going to say I told you so, but...” Mike smiles as he sees how cute she looks in his jacket, which is way too big for her.

“Whatever.” Jane playfully rolls her eyes as she basically swims in the oversized jacket on her body.

“So, can I ask you something?” Mike says and Jane turns to look at him.

“Sure.” She nods.

“How are you liking Hawkins?” Mike asks and Jane looks at him with surprise. “Do you like it or do you wish that you were still living where you used to?”

"Hawkins is fine." Jane says but pauses to think of her words next. "It's home to me. More than where I used to live. Some of my best memories are here."

"I understand that." Mike nods, not trying to push the issue.

"Plus, I couldn't live in Newton any longer." Jane continues on. "The only memories I really think of there is my mom and the pain she was in."

"Oh Jane, I'm so sorry." Mike shakes his head, feeling completely guilty for even asking. "I didn't mean to ask or bring anything up. I'm sorry!"

"It's okay." Jane says in a defeated tone and tears start to build in her eyes. "I'm sorry. It's just so hard to talk about still."

"No, don't apologize." Mike tells her honestly. "I'm sorry for even bringing it up. I don't want you to feel like you have to talk about it or tell me anything. I was just curious in learning more about you."

"I know." Jane nods. "Maybe one day I'll be able to talk about it without breaking down."

"I'll be glad to listen when that day comes." Mike says and Jane looks at him and sees the sincerity in his eyes and she knows he really means it and is not just saying it to be nice. "So how were those chili cheese fries?"

"Huh?" Jane says in confusion at Mike's sudden question.

"The chili cheese fries from early." Mike explains, trying to change the subject and put a smile on her face. "How were they?"

"They were delicious." Jane smiles at the memory. "Really good."

"So they were totally worth you getting mad at me for helping you pay?" Mike asks with a smirk and Jane looks at him with a challenging look.

"I wasn't mad." Jane tries to deny.

"You weren't too happy about it either." Mike teases and Jane laughs.

"I just don't like people doing things for me." Jane says and Mike laughs out.

"Yeah, I caught that." Mike says, looking at Jane with a big smile. "But I just knew you couldn't not get those. They're the best thing on the menu."

"Yeah." Jane laughs. "Thank you for that too."

"Whoa... wait, did you just say thank you?" Mike asks in a teasing tone and Jane rolls her eyes. "Like you mean it?"

"Shut up." Jane laughs, pushing the boy away with her shoulder as they continue walking up to her cabin. "Oh, here we are."

"Wow." Mike says, taking in the rustic looking cabin. "This place is awesome."

"Yeah." Jane nods, looking at it. "It's not much, but it's home."

"Well, it's cool." Mike says and Jane can't help but smile.

"Thank you so much again." Jane says as she unlocks her front door. "Not just for taking me home, but for everything you've done today. I feel like you were always saving me. You're pretty great."

"It was nothing." Mike shakes his head, dismissing the gratitude. "Anyone would have done it."

"You know, instead of fighting a compliment, a simple thank you would be much more appreciated." Jane says to him with a smirk and raised eyebrow.

"Touché Jane!" Mike laughs as she uses his own words against him. "Thank you and it wasn't a problem at all. I had fun today saving you."

"Well maybe we'll have to do it again sometime." Jane says and Mike's eyes light up.

“Well, if you’re not doing anything tomorrow.” Mike begins to say, feeling nerves come over him. “The group and I are probably just going to hangout tomorrow. You know, bowling and then having a game/movie night at my house tomorrow. You’re more than welcome to come. You know, if you want to.”

“Really?” Jane asks and Mike nods instantly. “Yeah, I’d like that.”

“Seriously?” Mike asks with complete surprise and it makes Jane laugh. “Cool. I can give you my number and you can text me whenever you want to talk and we can plan tomorrow.”

“Okay.” Jane smiles, handing Mike her phone so he can type in his number.

“There you go.” Mike hands her the phone back. “Just text me whenever you want to hang out tomorrow.”

“Will do. Thanks.” Jane smiles as she puts the phone back in her pocket. “And thank you again for driving me home. And walking me to my door.”

“It was not a problem.” Mike smiles widely. “Well, I should get going before your dad comes home. I don’t even want to know what he’d do if he saw me here this late.”

“Yeah, it wouldn’t be pretty.” Jane laughs, and Mike shakes his head agreeing.

“Well, have a good night Jane.” Mike says.

“It’s El.” Jane says and looks at her with confusion. “My name. I usually go by El.”

“El.” Mike repeats and smiles widely. “I like that.”

“My mom called me it from my middle name.” Jane explains, smiling at the mention of her mother. “Not many people know it, so they just call me Jane.”

“I see.” Mike nods understandingly. “Goodnight El.”

“Goodnight Mike.” Jane, no, El says with a smile. “Bye!”

“Bye!” Mike waves as she closes the front door and he turns to walk back down to his Jeep.

The teenager walks back to his car with the biggest smile on his face. From how the morning started to how it’s ended, he couldn’t believe what’s all happened. Going to that party was the best decision he’s made in his whole life.

As Mike gets to his Jeep, he hears his phone go off. He hops in before pulling his phone out to see who has texted him. It’s a number that he doesn’t know, but the message says all that he needs to know.

From: 3175542413

*Thank you again for today!
I can’t wait until tomorrow.
It’s El by the way :)*

*No problem at all.
I can’t wait either.*

*Oh and by the way...
I really like your jacket*

I totally forgot about that lol

*I may just keep it.
It looks better on me anyways
Besides it being too big lol*

I’m not denying that

Goodnight Mike :)

Goodnight El :)

And just like that, Mike's smile has gotten even bigger. It's crazy how literally only a few hours can change someone's life. Mike doesn't know much, but he knows that Jane is amazing and someone he wants to know more about; I mean *El* ;)

2. Chapter 2

Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry this took so long. Life has been crazy and work has been busy. I've had some great feedback from you all on this story and that makes my heart absolutely melt. I hope this chapter is another on you enjoy. Please let me know what you think and if I should continue. If you think I should, please let me know what you'd like to see in the future and where you want this to go. Thank you so much for your support and I hope you like this chapter.

As always, ENJOY!!!!

El Hopper

Today 11:27am

Good morning!

Morning El :)

*Are you guys still planning
on hanging out today?*

*Yes ma'am. Some of the others
are having a rough time waking up
because of last night.*

Hahah oh man. I can only imagine.

*We were thinking about bowling
around 2ish. And then grabbing some
food to have before going to my
house to watch movies and stuff.
Does that work for you?*

Yeah! That sounds great.

Okay cool.

*I can just meet you guys there
whenever you are ready to go.*

Okay.

*Whenever these guys pull themselves
together and get ready we'll probably
leave so probably the next hour or two*

Okay sounds good.

*Just text me when you're on
your way and I'll meet you there.*

Okay cool.

*See you soon El
Delivered*

Today 1:52pm

Hey we are on our way

Okay I'll leave now

El looks in the mirror one last time to make sure she looks okay. Making sure her outfit looks good enough for her to hang out with the group; to hang out with Mike. After a finally look of approval, she quickly grabs her keys to leave.

El hurries down the pathway to where she and Hopper parks. She sends him a quick text to let him know she was leaving to hangout and then drives off to the bowling alley. Excitement filled her body as she was on her way.

After all of the fun she had last night with the group in such a short amount of time, she knew that today could only be better. Before she knew it she was arriving to the alley and parking. Before getting out, she looks in her mirror one last time to add a small layer of lip gloss and then heads inside.

When she walks in she realizes that the place is pretty packed. Living in a place like Hawkins where there aren't many things to do, the bowling alley was a main attraction in the small town. She looks around through the crowd as she doesn't see Mike or anyone anywhere.

After glancing around a couple more times, she pulls out her phone to send him a quick text that she was there. After waiting a minute to no answer, she texts him again to ask where they are.

Again, no answer and she starts to get worried. She decides to try and call him to see if he'll pick up; he doesn't. El starts to feel as if she was being stood up by them and they were playing a joke on her or something.

Worry starts to build up and she's about to turn and leave when she here's a loud 'Fuck you' coming from just ahead of her. She takes a few steps to look around a big crowd to see them already in a lane.

Relief filled her body as she learns they weren't standing her up. She walks over to the group and sees everyone from last night there besides Mike. Wondering where he was, she walks up to the group as they were putting their shoes on to bowl.

"Hey guys!" El says with an excited smile and the group turns to look at her.

No one says a word. They actually stopped talking when they heard her voice and all have confusion written on their faces. They look at each other almost asking what she was doing.

El isn't sure what's wrong but then realizes that they may not remember her from last night. All four of them were pretty under the influence and there's a possibility that they have no idea who she is or what she was even doing saying hi to them.

What if Mike didn't tell them she was coming to join? What if Mike doesn't show up because as she looks at the group, none of them seem to act like they were missing someone? Oh my gosh, they really don't know who she is; evident by the looks on all of their faces.

“Sorry!” El says embarrassed as she turns to walk away but instantly collides into someone. “Oh, um sor...”

“El!” Mike says as he grabs ahold of her so she doesn’t fall. “Are you okay?”

“Mike!” El says in relief when she looks up to the lanky boy in front of her.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to be in your way.” Mike apologizes immediately as he’s still holding her. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine.” El nods.

“Where were you going?” Mike asks as he realizes he was holding onto El still and quickly lets her go.

“Well I, uh...” El begins to say as she turns to look back at the group.

“I can’t.” Dustin coughs out as he starts to laugh. “Your face. I can’t.”

“What?” Mike asks with confusion as all of his friends start to laugh.

“I’m sorry, we couldn’t help it.” Max says in between breaths.

“Couldn’t help what?” Mike asks with irritation as they are all laughing; possibly at El’s expense.

“She came walking over here all chipper and we just couldn’t help but act like we had no idea who she was.” Lucas explains and the group laughs a bit more.

“The look on your face literally was priceless.” Dustin points at El as he tries to catch his breath from laughing. “Like you thought we had no idea who you were.”

“I didn’t know if you guys remembered me from last night.” El admits in embarrassment.

“Of course we remember you.” Will tells her with a big smile. “How can we forget the coolest person from last night?”

“Really?” El asks and Will nods immediately.

“Yeah, we may have been hammered last night.” Max adds on. “But we remember our pizza loving, laughing at every one of our stupid jokes, new friend.”

“Yeah.” Lucas nods in agreement with his girlfriend.

“Plus, Mike wouldn’t stop talking about you this morning.” Dustin says and Mike’s face turns into an instant glare. “There’s no way we’d have a chance to not know who you were.”

“That’s not true.” Mike denies as El turns to look at him with a small smile. “I just told them that you were joining us today.”

“And that we are making her wait and that we need to pull ourselves together because she shouldn’t have to wait on us.” Max mocks in annoyance. “And blah blah blah.”

“I can’t stand you at times.” Mike says through gritted teeth to the red head.

“Love you too, Frog face.” Max teases.

“But seriously, Jane.” Lucas speaks up to cause the girl to turn and look at him. “We’re sorry for making you think we didn’t know who you were.”

“Yeah, it’s just something we do when someone joins our group.” Dustin explains. “Almost like an initiation.”

“Is that so?” El asks and the group nods. “So now that I’ve been welcomed into the group, that means I’m...?”

“You’re one of us now.” Will says to her and it causes El to smile widely.

“Welcome to the Party, Jane.” Dustin states with a smile on his face.

“It’s El.” El tells the group. “That’s what the people close to me call me.”

“El?” Max asks in surprise. “That’s perfect.”

“Yeah.” Lucas agrees. “Welcome to the Party, El.”

“Thanks!” El smiles widely as she feels accepted for probably one of the first times in her life.

“So are we going to just stare at each other all day with stupid smiles on our face?” Dustin ruins the simple moment. “Or are we going to bowl?”

“Jesus, Dustin.” Mike groans out at his obnoxious friend.

“Somebody needs a damn Snickers.” Max says and El can’t help but laugh at it. “Pretty good, huh?”

“Yeah.” El nods in response.

“I say let’s start bowling.” Lucas suggests to the group.

“Yeah, sounds good to me.” Will nods his head. “I need to try to find a good ball.”

“Probably not the first time you’ve said that before.” Dustin quips and the gasp that comes from Will’s mouth is evident and Dustin starts to backtrack. “I’m sorry man. I didn’t mean to say that. It just slipped out.”

“It’s fine.” Will shakes his head. “Sure that’s not the first time you’ve told someone it’s slipped out before either.”

“Fucking Byers!” Max shouts with laughter at his comeback.

“Holy shit that was good.” Lucas claps as Dustin is in shock.

“Fucking touché man.” Dustin says as he wraps an arm around Will and they walk away to go grab some balls to bowl with; Max and Lucas follow as they still are trying to recover from the joke. “But that was a little too good man.”

“I am so sorry for them.” Mike shakes his head in embarrassment. “They really don’t have any filters at times and it’s pretty

outrageous.”

“No, Mike it’s okay.” El tells him honestly. “I just wasn’t expecting all that.”

“Well it will get worse.” Mike warns her. “So I can tell them to cool it down when we’re around you.”

“No.” El tells him immediately. “They’re completely fine. It was actually kind of funny.”

“Really?” Mike asks in surprise. “Are you sure?”

“Yeah.” El nods. “They make me laugh.”

“They’ll probably make you mad at times too.” Mike breathes out. “Believe me.”

“Well don’t worry about me.” El tells him. “I think I can handle them.”

“I don’t doubt that at all.” Mike smiles as he looks at her. “You look pretty, by the way. Pretty good, I mean.”

“Thanks.” El blushes at his complement. “You look pretty good yourself.”

“Yeah, um.” Mike clears his throat as he tries to gather himself. “We should get you some shoes so you can bowl.”

“Yeah, that sounds like a good idea.” El says when she realizes that she doesn’t have any shoes yet.

She follows behind Mike closely as they walk up to the counter. They wait a few seconds before the worker can get to them. Mike takes the initiative to talk.

“Hey, yeah can I have a size 11 please.” Mike tells him and turns to look at El. “What size do you need?”

“Um, a 7 and a half.” El says and Mike nods before turning back around.

“And a 7 and a half too, please.” He says and the worker nods and grabs them from the shelf to hand over. “Thanks.”

“Do we pay now or after?” El asks him and he shakes his head.

“We already paid for the shoes and games.” Mike informs her. “So you don’t need to worry about it.”

“You don’t have to pay for me.” El says and Mike already knows what she’s going to say. “I can take care of myse...”

“I know you can.” Mike cuts her off so she can’t finish. “But Will paid for it since his mom knows the owner and they get us a discount. So if you want to get mad at someone for paying, get mad at him.”

“Oh.” El says in surprise. “I, uh. I should say ‘thank you’ to him.”

“Yeah.” Mike nods along.

“And probably sorry to you.” El says in embarrassment when she realizes that she was going to scold him, again.

“No need to.” Mike shakes his head. “I know you don’t like people paying for things and all. But honestly, it’s starting to become my favorite thing to do.”

“Why?” El asks in confusion.

“Because you get so worked up about it and it’s cute.” Mike admits and El can feel her cheeks blush. “I mean, it’s just fun to get you riled up over something so simple.”

“Hmm, okay.” El says with a smirk.

“Plus, I like doing things for you.” Mike tells her honestly. “It’s what friends are for.”

“Oh really?” El challenges and Mike’s smile makes her heart melt.

“Yeah.” Mike clears his throat. “We should uh, we should go bowl before they skip us.”

“Okay.” El nods to the boy. “Yeah, you’re right.”

Both teenagers walk over to their friends. They were already entering the names into the system where there lane was. Mike and El quickly put their shoes on and grab some bowling balls before it was their turns to throw.

Dustin being the gentleman he is, makes sure he’s first in the order to bowl. Followed by Max, El, Will, Lucas, and then Mike. So he made sure to let the girls go before everyone, besides him of course.

As he steps up to take his first throw, the rest of the group sits and watches to see how he does. They all decide to use no bumpers and were proud to say that they didn’t need them. That was until Dustin threw his first ball; instant gutter.

“Wow!” Max says loudly as they all laugh.

“Fuck off.” Dustin snaps back. “It slipped.”

“Sure it did.” Lucas says sarcastically. “I thought you were good at bowling?”

“Hey, you know what?” Dustin turns to look at his friends. “You guys are assholes.”

The entire group can’t hold it on and laughs hysterically. Dustin flips them off before throwing his next ball. This time he was able to hit a few pins and redeem himself a bit.

Watching the curly haired boy do terrible allowed El to relax even more. She’s never really bowled much and when she has, she’s been terrible. So she was nervous when they decided to use no bumpers but after watching Dustin, and then Max, throw gutter balls she was able to relax.

She was pleasantly surprised when it was her turn and she knocked down 9 pins her first throw. Between the ‘holy shit’ that came from Dustin and look of wonder on the others faces, she felt pretty good.

She felt even better watching the last three boys all score less than her. Dustin made sure to try and redeem his first round and focused a

little harder when he was throwing. Though he was trying to focus, the boy was no way serious at all and it made it so much better to watch.

The first game goes pretty well as Mike ended up having the best score at the end. El didn't really care what her score ended up as, but was surprised to know what she didn't do the worse. Not even the second worse. So when they said they were going to start another game, she was more excited than she thought she'd be.

What really made the games fun to do wasn't the actual bowling; instead it was the little sarcastic comments and jokes that were flowing between the group of friends. El couldn't stop herself from laughing at their crazy antics. She even joined in on some of it which made the entire group love her more than before.

She felt really comfortable with the group. Though she initially had only really spoken to them because of Mike and the party, she was able to enjoy time with each person individually. She wasn't only sitting next to Mike and being awkward when he'd go bowl, but she was sitting and joking around with everyone; really bonding and laughing with Will.

"I suck at this." Will breaths out when he sits next to her after his turn was up.

"Don't worry, I do too." El comforts him.

"Pretty sure you're winning right now." Will points out and El looks up to see she was in fact winning. "So I think you don't suck at all."

"It might just be beginner's luck." El shrugs.

"Well if you'd like to share the luck, I'd gladly take some." Will smiles at her and she can't help but laugh. "So, are you having fun?"

"Oh my gosh, yes." El tells him honestly. "This is so much fun."

"Good." Will says sincerely. "I'm glad you came out with us today."

"Me too." El turns to tell him. "Oh, and thank you for paying for the games. I can pay you back."

“Oh no, I didn’t pay for the games.” Will shakes his head.

“Mike said your mom got us a discount and you paid for us to play.” El explains with confusion.

“Yeah, she got us the discount and technically I was the one to pay them. But it wasn’t my money that I paid with.” Will clears things up. “Mike’s the one that paid for everything. He just gave me the money to give them.”

“Oh.” El says with realization that Mike had paid for her, again.

The teenage girls turns her attention to the tall and lanky boy. She sees how much fun he’s having with his friends and she can’t help but feel herself feel some sparks when she looks at him. Hearing his laugh or seeing him smile at something one of the others does.

She can’t believe that this time yesterday, she had no idea who this guy even was. Didn’t even know he really existed; which is crazy because it’s not like Hawkins is a big place or their high school was big. But it was big enough that if you only hung around one group and didn’t have classes together then you’d probably never see some people.

El was deep in her thoughts until she felt a tap on her arm. Turning to look at Will, he tells her it’s her turn again. She nods and quickly gets up to grab her ball to throw.

When she goes to grab her ball, Mike walks passed her to take a seat. When they pass each other, both just smile. No words are said but the two sport the goofiest grins possible.

El quickly turns her attention ahead on the lanes so she can hide the fact she was blushing. Mike didn’t notice but it’s probably because he was blushing himself. Having thought in his head about how amazing today has been. Just having her presence around brings so much joy; not only to him but his group of friends.

After the play a couple more games, the group decides to go grab some food. Mike, Will, and El all drive their cars to Bionic Burger. They decide that it would be the quickest and easiest place to grab

dinner.

After they all order, they go and grab a table where they all can sit at. Lucas and Max are sitting on one side of the table with El and Will on the other across from them. Dustin is at the end of the table next to Will and Max while Mike is at the other end next to El and Lucas.

The group continues their jokes and messing around. Things quieted down a bit when their food finally came. Most of the boys were munching away like they've never eaten before. As Mike ate, he couldn't help sneak glances if El.

Seeing how her face lights up with she laughs or hears something interesting. He's not quite sure but there's just something about this girl that he's mesmerized by. Mike snaps out of his thoughts when he sees who walks through the door next.

"Uh, El?" Mike stutters out to get her attention. "I think you have a visitor."

"Huh?" El looks at him with confusion and then turns around to see her dad walking through the door. "Dad?"

"Hey kid." The chief greets as he walks to their table.

"What are you doing here?" El asks him. "Is everything okay?"

"Oh yeah, everything is fine." Hopper nods his head. "Just picking up something to eat before tonight's long shift."

"Long shift?" El repeats and her father nods. "Working late again tonight?"

"Yeah kid, I'm sorry." Hopper breathes out because he knows he's been working late a lot lately. "Things should slow down soon."

"It's fine." El shrugs and the rest of the group watches their interactions without saying any words.

"But you all seem to be having fun." Hopper says broadly to the group. "You guys staying out of trouble?"

“Yes sir.” Mike tells him instantly, nerves flowing throughout his body.

“Just grabbing food before we go watch some movies and play video games.” Dustin explains.

“I see.” The chief nods and keeps glancing over at Mike; somewhat getting a sense that he’s the reason his daughter was here with the group. “Is it just going to be you all at the house?”

“Yes sir.” Mike answers nervously as the chief’s eyes narrow in on him. “We’ll be at my house just hanging out.”

“Hmm, okay.” Hopper nods his head; making Mike more and more nervous and he has no idea why. “So El, are you planning on going over to Wheeler’s house?”

“Yeah, I was.” El tells him and Mike can feel his whole body tense up when she says that. “Is it okay if I go hang out with my friends, dad?”

“Yeah.” The chief nods when he sees the excitement in his daughter’s eyes to be included with the group; one that he’d be skeptical about but when he sees Will Byers with Wheeler and the rest of the group he knows that he has nothing to worry about. “Just make sure you’re home at a reasonable time.”

“Thanks dad!” El smiles and gets up from her seat to wrap her arms around him for a hug.

“No problem kid.” Hopper says sweetly to his daughter as he hugs her back before looking over at Mike and the rest of the group. “No later than midnight.”

“Yes sir!” Mike immediately says again feeling as if the chief was talking directly to him.

“Hey Mayfield.” Hopper calls out after breaking apart from El. “Can I have a quick word with you?”

“Uh, sure.” Max nods and gets up from her seat to walk over to the chief; Lucas keeping a close and protective eye over his girlfriend.

"How are you doing?" The chief asks the young girl as they step a few feet away from the rest of the kids to have a personal talk. "Everything alright?"

"Yeah." Max simply nods. "Everything is fine."

"Has there been any more incidents?" The chief asks and he can see the hesitancy in the red head's eyes.

"No." Max whispers out.

"Good." Hopper nods and he can tell how closed off the girl is. "Here, if either of them get out of hand again or anything you call me."

"Okay." Max takes the card from the chief.

"I mean it kid." Hopper tells her sincerely as she looks up into his eyes. "Anything happens, you call me and I'm there. No matter what."

"Okay." Max says a bit more graciously as she really believes him and is thankful for his understanding. "Thank you!"

"Okay." The chief simply nods his head and the teenager goes back to sit by her boyfriend at the table where he never took his eyes off of her just in case she needed him. "Alright kid, I better get going."

"Okay dad." El turns to look at him, along with the other kids there.

"You all be safe tonight." The chief tells them protectively. "And kid, make sure you text me when you get home tonight. And on time."

"I will." El laughs nervously as she knows her dad probably knows she wasn't home on time last night like she should have been.

"Okay, bye guys." Hopper says one final time and the kids wave as he grabs his food and leaves.

The kids go back to eating their food. Once they all finish, they head out to head to Mike's so they can watch some movies and play some video games. Before they go to the house though, they stop at the local grocery store to pick up some soda, candy and popcorn.

After spending time deciding what of each to get, they finally make it to Mike's. El was extremely surprised to see how clean it was compared to what she thought it would be since he did have a house full of drunks last night.

The group watches a movie right off the bat. Deciding on Shaun of the Dead. El has never seen it and thought it was quite an interesting take for a comedy about the zombie apocalypse. Mike spent most of the time looking over to make sure she was enjoying herself and not bored with it.

After the movie, the boys decide they want to play some video games. Dustin had brought over his Super Nintendo so the group can get down on some Mario. So as Dustin, Lucas, and Mike focused on playing the video game, the others sit on the couch and talk; also laugh at how mad the three boys get when they lose a life.

"I can't believe those three." El says with her cheeks wide in a grin after hearing Dustin yell from dying again. "Are they always like this?"

"Oh yeah." Max nods. "They are three of the worst losers when it comes to video games."

"I know you saw a glimpse of us last night." Will tells her. "But we are pretty much always like this. With or without alcohol."

"Eww, I don't even want to hear the word alcohol." Max fake gags. "My stomach still hasn't recovered fully yet."

"Hey babe!" Lucas turns around from his spot in front of the tv. "Want to play next game?"

"Yeah." Max accepts and turns to look at the other two. "I guess I have to go show them how it's done."

"You go girl!" Will cheers her on as she goes over to sit on the ground with the boys to play.

El continues to watch from where she is on the couch next to Will. Both laughing uncontrollably when now all four of them get mad at each other for losing a life. The way they talk to each other, cracking

jokes at one another's expense, is almost too much for the young girl to handle. She can't breathe because she's laughing so hard.

"So what do you think?" Will asks her out of nowhere; causing El to turn and look at him. "Think maybe you'd like to be friends with us past this weekend?"

"Are you kidding me?" El says with surprise. "I love you guys. You are so much fun."

"Really?" Will asks and the girl nods. "Good. Because I know you have your other friends and all but we like you. It feels like you're one of us."

"I feel like I am too." El admits to him. "Honestly, for the first time I feel like I fit in. Like I can just be myself without being made fun of."

"I can promise you this." Will says sincerely. "You can always be yourself around us."

"Cool." El smiles and turns her attention back to the group playing; she can't help but watch Mike in admiration as he tries to focus on the video game. "Hey Will, can I ask you something?"

"Yeah." Will nods. "Anything."

"What's Mike's deal?" She asks him and the teenage boy looks at her with confusion.

"What do you mean?" Will questions.

"Like how is Mike so nice and stuff?" El further asks. "Is he always like this or is it just in front of someone new?"

"Truthfully, Mike is the best guy I know." Will tells her honestly. "He's really caring and honest. He's just a good guy. An even better friend."

"Really?" El asks and he nods. "I was just wondering because he won't let me pay for things and has been so caring for my feelings so I didn't know if it was just an act or what."

“I can promise you that it’s not an act.” Will tells her intently.

“I’m sorry.” El shakes her head. “I know that he’s your friend and I shouldn’t be asking you these questions about him. I was just trying to learn more about him because he seems really cool.”

“No, don’t worry about it.” Will tells her and can see her attention draw back to him when he shouts in triumph about beating the level. “Honestly El, Mike is the best person I know. If you ever need anything, he’d be there for you in an instant.”

“Really?” El asks and Will continues on.

“Mike has always been there for me. Always having my back when others weren’t necessarily so accepting.” Will says and El can see that it’s difficult for him to explain.

“Accepting?” El asks him.

“I was always a different little boy compared to my friends. I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but I’m not like the rest of the guys.” Will explains and looks over to his friends. “Well when I started understanding what I felt and who I was, some didn’t know how to take it. My dad left not too long after he found out from my mom that I liked guys. She was more than understanding and supportive, but he wasn’t. Didn’t want to have a son who liked boys.”

“Oh Will.” El says when she hears the sad story.

“It was difficult for me. Not really knowing what I can be because people were acting different to me.” Will continues on. “You know how small Hawkins is and how everyone finds out about everything. Well when people found out, I was sort of an outcast. Parents didn’t want the little ‘gay’ boy coming around to hang out at their house with their sons. Figuring that I was only hanging out with them because I liked them rather than it just being about me being actual friends.”

“That’s horrible.” El gasps in disbelief.

“Yeah, only 12-13 years old and I already had this perception about me. It was difficult.” Will pauses to gather himself. “Out of all that

though, Mike never left my side. He didn't make anything feel weird or awkward. He was supportive since the first day. Including me in everything he did and making sure that whoever we were hanging out with accepted me for who I was as well."

"Really?" El asks in amazement.

"He never made me think I was wrong for liking guys or anything. He listened as I talked about my feelings about other guys and didn't make me feel uncomfortable at all." Will explains more. "He's always been there for me when I needed him most. He's always looked out for me and has been super protective. Especially with my brother being busy with picking up extra shifts at work to help my mom when my dad left or when he left for college. Mike was always there."

"That's amazing of him." El says sincerely.

"He'll be the first to tell you that it wasn't a big deal. Him being the way he is isn't something he's trying to do or thinking he has to do. That's just who he is." Will says as he looks deeply into her eyes. "So if you want to know if this is who Mike really is or if he's just being nice to you, well take a look at him. This is who he is. And he's truly the best guy that I know. The best friend I could have ever asked for."

"He sounds like he's too good to be true." El says and Will can only laugh. "What?"

"Are you seeing something you like in Mike?" Will asks with a smirk and El's cheeks blush instantly.

"I... no." El says hesitantly and Will smiles widely. "He just seems cool. Like a good friend."

"Uh huh." Will nods skeptically. "Sure. Whatever you say."

"Stop." El blushes more and turns her attention back to Mike after he wins another level in the game.

"He's plenty single." Will tells her and El can't help her smile from growing. "Just in case you wanted to know."

“Thanks.” El says and Will can see that there’s a spark in her eyes and she is definitely feeling something for his best friend.

Both of their attentions go back to the group playing. Mike turns to look at El and Will and El can feel her heart skip a beat when they make eye contact. He asks if either of them want to take a turn at the game and both nod.

The rest of the night is a blast. The group plays more video games, eat candy and popcorn, and also watch some more movies. Mike and El both have some good interactions with one another, causes sparks to fly within their own bodies.

Not really sure how all of this happened, but both are pretty happy with where they are at. El has fit in amazingly with group and Mike seriously couldn’t be any happier. Having his friend like her means a lot to him; you know, since right now they’re just friends themselves.

A few hours have passed and the group are having just as much fun as they started out with earlier in the day. The laughs have not ended and the jokes just keep coming. None of them want the night to end but they also haven’t looked at the clock to realize the night has flown by.

“Whoa, El.” Will says when he looks at his phone. “Did you see what time it is?”

“No.” El shakes her head as she quickly looks at her phone. “Oh no! I need to get home.”

“Do you have to?” Max asks her, not wanting her to leave.

“I wish I could stay longer.” El says sincerely. “But I know my dad wouldn’t be happy if I stayed out really late.”

“Boo.” Dustin says with his mouth full of popcorn.

“I know.” El says with sadness. “This has been so much fun.”

“Don’t go!” Max pleads and El can’t help but laugh.

“I wish I didn’t have to.” El says but looks back at her phone. “But I

only have 15 minutes until I have to get home or my dad will be mad.”

“Noooooooo.” Will says as he wraps his arms around El. “Don’t leave, friend.”

“Will.” Mike laughs. “She needs to go. We can’t let Hopper get mad at her because of us.”

“Yeah.” El nods her head. “But I’ll be back soon.”

“You will?” Will asks with a big smile and Mike looks at her with surprise.

“Yeah.” El nods her head. “Why wouldn’t I come hang out with my friends?”

“You fucking better.” Max shouts to her as she lays her head on Lucas’ thigh as they watch the movie.

“Okay, good.” Will smiles and hugs his friend. “Bye El.”

“Bye Will.” El hugs him back and looks at the other three who are still on the ground. “Bye guys! Thank you for a fun night.”

“Bye!” They all say in unison.

El waves to the group and starts walking towards the front door. Mike follows her out and walks her to her car. When they get out there, it’s just the two of them and El doesn’t know what to say. When she turns to look at him though, she’s surprised to see he has keys in his hand.

“What are you doing?” El asks with confusion.

“I’m going to follow you home to make sure you make it safely.” Mike tells her and El is completely surprised.

“You don’t have to follow me home, Mike.” El tells him and he nods.

“I know, but I want to.” Mike says and El can feel herself smile. “I just want to make sure you make it home safely.”

“You don’t have to worry about me.” El says and Mike smirks.

“I know.” Mike laughs. “But we better get going so Hopper doesn’t get mad you aren’t home on time.”

“Fine.” El gives in and playfully rolls her eyes before getting into her car.

Mike hustles and jumps into his car as well. He quickly sends a text to the group that he was driving El home to make sure she was safe before hurrying to follow behind her. The two make the drive in less than 10 minutes.

Mike parks his jeep behind the girl’s car and they both get out. He walks over to her and sees she’s sending the text to the chief to let him know she’s home. Mike stands there for a few seconds until she looks up from her phone at him.

“Everything good?” Mike asks her.

“Yeah.” El nods and puts her phone back into her pocket. “Told him I’m home and goodnight.”

“Good.” Mike smiles and looks down at his hands.

“Yeah.” El nods and can feel the nervousness of the boy’s; it matches her own nerves. “But um, thank you for driving here with me. You didn’t need to.”

“I know.” Mike laughs.

“Are you going to let me actually walk up to my cabin alone tonight, or are you going to insist to walk me up there too?” El asks with a smirk on her face.

“What do you think?” Mike says and El laughs.

“That’s what I thought.” El shakes her head with a smile.

Mike and El turn to walk up the pathway to the cabin. Mike is a bit more comfortable walking up to it with her from memory of last night. The two walk in a comfortable silence all the way up to the

front door. Once they get there, El turns to look at the lanky boy in front of her.

“Thank you for tonight.” El says graciously. “I had a great time.”

“Yeah, me too.” Mike nods. “Sorry for my friends. They’re a bit ridiculous.”

“I enjoyed them all.” El tells him and it comforts the boy a bit. “Plus, I think they are sort of my friends now too. So no need to apologize.”

“That’s true.” Mike smiles widely as she calls them her friends.

“But thank you for today.” El thanks him. “For everything today. Between paying for bowling, inviting me to hang out with you guys, and for driving me home; again.”

“Anytime El.” Mike smiles and El can feel her heart melt looking at his smile.

“Even though I don’t need you to worry about me and pay for things.” El says with a smirk.

“You know, I think you’ve told me that once or twice before.” Mike laughs and El nods.

“But I really do appreciate it.” El tells him sincerely. “Truly, I do.”

“Anytime.” Mike says sincerely. “And I don’t know if you were just saying that you’d be back or not for everyone else’s sake. But you are always welcomed to hang out.”

“I meant it.” El tells him. “I’d love to be back and hanging out with you guys. I mean, if you want me to and you’re okay with it.”

“Yeah.” Mike smiles as wide as he can. “Definitely.”

“Good.” El smiles back, feeling all fluttery and stuff.

“Well, I guess I should get back to my house before they destroy everything.” Mike says and El laughs in agreement.

“Yeah, good decision.” El says with a smile and hint of nervousness.

“Well, goodnight El.” Mike says gently as he looks into El’s eyes.

“Goodnight, Mike.” El says back and leans in on her tippy toes to place her lips gently on the tall boy’s right cheek. “Thanks for the great day.”

“Uh, yeah.” Mike stutters as he can feel a tingling sensation flow throughout his body. “Anytime. Bye El.”

“Bye Mike.” El says as she turns to enter the house.

The boy stands there for a second as he tries to gather himself. The blush that covers his face is immediate as this beautiful girl just kissed him on his cheek. Her perfect and soft lips just brushed against his cheek and he couldn’t help but feel butterflies.

Mike, after a few seconds of being frozen in that moment, realizes that he needs to leave the front door; especially since if El happens to take a look outside and sees him still standing there. So he quickly makes his way down the path with a big smile on his face.

Little does he know that El was on the other side of the door feeling the same exact sensation and butterflies that he was feeling. She has no idea how or where that confidence came from, but the moment felt right. And her rosy red cheeks would be enough to embarrass the girl if the boy had seen her right now.

El leans against the front door and looks out in front of her. It’s the simple living room of the cabin her and the Chief have but right now there’s a different feeling to it. Looking around, she’s noticing that this could be the place where her new friends could come hang out at.

Instead of it just being her and Hopper, or even just her alone; now, it could be a place where she invites the group too. Where she invites Mike to hang out. And that feeling makes this cabin feel more like home than it has ever in her life.

El makes her way to her bedroom to grab some clothes to change into for bed. After quickly changing, she grabs some water from the

kitchen before heading to bed. Before she gets comfy, she hears her phone go off with a notification. Looking at it, she can't help but smile.

Mike Wheeler

Yesterday 1:52pm

Hey we are on our way

Okay I'll leave now

Delivered

Today 12:37am

*I already miss having you here
Especially with these idiots here.*

Lol miss me already ;)

*Yeah because you're normal
And fun and not them lol*

*Well I miss hanging out
with you guys too already.*

*You're always welcome to
come hang out*

*Good.
Because I sort of like you guys
:)*

*We like you too :)
But I'll stop bothering now
so you can enjoy the rest of
your night.*

*You're not a bother Mike!
I'm just getting ready to lay
in bed and watch a movie*

*Oh what movie are you
going to watch?*

*I'm not too sure yet...
Any suggestions?!?*

*Depends what you are in the
mood for lol
Comedy?
Action?
Horror?*

*Definitely not horror!!
Watching a scary movie as I'm alone
in this cabin would be a terrible idea.*

*Yeah probably a good choice haha
So comedy or action?*

*Hmm... maybe comedy. I want
to watch something funny but cute*

*So a romance movie?!?
Seriously? Lol*

*HEY!!
No judging lol*

*I'm not lol I'm just saying...
Lol but how about Mr. Deeds?
It's funny and has a romance in it*

Hmm, maybe.

*We all think the main actress in it
looks like Will's mom*

Like Mrs. Byers? Really??

*Yeah lol
Google it... she looks exactly
like her.*

*Oh my gosh!!
You are so right. She does!*

Told you lol it's pretty crazy

Yeah lol

*What about How to Lose a Guy in 10 days??
That move isn't too bad*

*I love that movie!!!!
Yes!! Good choice!!!
Thank you for the help lol*

Anytime! Got to love McConaughey.

*Alright
Alright
Alright*

Yes haha he's the best

*Lol yeah
So what are you guys doing?*

We're just playing video games still

*Oh I can leave you alone.
I don't want to bother you
while you're playing games and stuff*

*No, you're good!
Rather talk to you and keep you company
than listen to Dustin and Lucas fight more*

What are they arguing about now?

*Honestly... I have no idea lol
And I don't really care at all either*

*Makes sense lol
So I'm not bothering you?*

*No ma'am
Not at all. Don't think it's actually
possible for you to bother me lol*

The smile that spreads across El's face when reading that text from Mike is priceless. She can't help but feel something for this boy. He just knows the right things to say without even trying.

El, though she was tired earlier and should be exhausted now since it was past midnight, was now wide awake. Possibly from talking with Mike and from the happiness that she's feeling, she doesn't mind staying up to text him.

And that's exactly what she does. The two teenagers end up texting and talking until about 3:30 in the morning. They also spend the next two days texting and talking too. The conversation was always easy too. Not ever really running out of topics or things to say.

So when Tuesday morning rolls around, Mike can honestly say he's never been so excited to go to school in his entire life. Not because of school, of course, but because he will get to see El there. Mostly, he's excited to maybe talk and sit with her at lunch.

The hardest part was waiting through his morning classes. Mike hasn't talked to El yet today besides the quick exchanges of 'Good morning' to each other when they woke up. But neither teenager has had the chance to text because of class.

So as soon as the lunch bell rings, Mike can feel himself get excited. He walks to the cafeteria with Dustin and Will and doesn't run into El yet. The three boys walk to the table that they usually sit at; where Max and Lucas are already at.

The group sits down and enjoys their lunches. All are talking about whatever new games they want to get that are coming out soon and whether or not they had homework due in the next class. Well, everyone besides Mike are talking.

Mike is lost in his own little world. He's not really paying attention to

his friends. Instead he's sort of keeping an eye out in case he has a chance to see El. Maybe she'd want to join the group at their table and hangout.

The teenager hasn't even touched his lunch yet since he's sort of out of it. It's not until Max throws a carrot at his face to make him snap out of it and look at his friends.

"What the hell?" Mike reacts as the carrot hits his chin. "What was that for?"

"Trying to get your fucking attention." Max tells him. "You haven't answered a damn thing we've asked."

"What'd you ask?" Mike looks at her with annoyance on his face.

"Are you going to eat your pudding?" Dustin asks and Mike looks at him with complete irritation on his face.

"Seriously?" Mike asks with fury. "That's what you had to freaking ask me?"

"Well, yeah." Dustin nods. "You aren't eating and I want some pudding."

"That was worth throwing a carrot at me?" Mike turns to ask Max.

"Sure." Max shrugs with a big smile. "Honestly, any excuse to throw something at you is worth it."

"I can't stand you sometimes." Mike says through gritted teeth.

"I know." Max smiles at him. "That's why Lucas keeps me around, I think."

"That and because you're so pretty." Lucas says and leans in to kiss her cheek.

"Barf." Dustin says at the interaction between the two and Max throws a carrot at him as well. "Fucking shit! Don't waste food."

"Tell that to Mike." Lucas nods his head across the table to his best

friend. "He hasn't eaten anything."

"I'm getting there." Mike answers. "Just busy thinking."

"Thinking and looking for someone." Max says under her breath but Mike heard it and can't help but glare at her.

"I fu..." Mike begins but is interrupted before finishing his statement.

"Mike!" Will taps his arm to interrupt him. "Look! There's El."

"Where?" Mike turns his head fast in the direction the Will discretely points to.

"There!" Will says and Mike's face lights up immediately when he sees her.

The teenager looks so cute as she walks across the cafeteria. She's wearing leggings with knee high boots, and a simple white tank top with a charcoaled grey cardigan sweater. Something so simple but she looks so amazing in and Mike can't help but smile as he looks at her.

Mike is so focused on the girl that he doesn't see the faces his friends are making behind him. Especially since they all can see how smitten he is over her.

Mike is probably being a bit too obvious that he's looking at her, but he doesn't care. The two have spent the entire weekend texting and talking and it's been amazing. He just can't get enough of her and doesn't want to, so his eyes are on her.

They light up even more when as she walks she makes eye contact with him and shows a small smile. Mike can feel his heart flutter as she walks closer and closer to their table; looking like she's going to join them. Mike makes sure to look around to check that there's a seat for her when she joins.

When he verifies there's an empty seat right next to him, he turns back around. Just in time for her to walk right passed him and the table. He watches as she walks out of the cafeteria; most likely meeting up with her friends.

“Ouch.” Dustin says as he, along with the other kids, watched what just happened.

“Dustin.” Will says with a look of disbelief.

“She definitely blew you off.” Max says with a laugh and Mike glares at her with more anger than he’s ever had before.

“Apparently she didn’t like hanging out with us this weekend.” Lucas says.

Mike can’t say anything. He doesn’t know what to say or how to actually react to this. He feels as if his heart has just been ripped out; which is crazy because he has no reason to feel this way. It’s not like the two have discussed any feelings. Hell, how can they have feelings for one another? They’ve only talked for a total of 5 days or so.

Still, even though he doesn’t have the right to feel like this or get too worked up about it, it doesn’t mean that he doesn’t. There was just a small hope inside of him that thought maybe, just maybe, she’d sit with them and by him.

Mike is completely lost in thought. Not even paying any attention to his friends as they continue their conversations from earlier. Mike just looks down at his sandwich and chips, not yet eating any of it. He’s so lost in his own thoughts that he doesn’t even notice the seat next to him is now occupied.

“Hi!” A gentle voice appears and Mike feels as if he’s hearing things until Will nudges him to cause him to look up. “You okay?”

“What?” Mike asks when he looks directly into the kindest eyes he’s seen in a while. “Hey!”

“Hi.” El says again as she laughs at the surprised boy. “You alright?”

“Yeah, I’m fine.” Mike nods instantly. “I was just thinking.”

“Looked like you were thinking hard about something.” El says before asking. “What were you thinking about?”

“You probably.” Dustin says absentmindedly and Mike kicks him

under the table. “Ah, fucking shit. What the hell Mike?”

“The boy ain’t lying.” Max shrugs and only smiles as Mike looks at her with a glare full of hatred.

“Is this true?” El asks and Mike turns to look at her with embarrassment all over his face.

“I... uh, yeah.” Mike says and El can feel a blush creep across her face.

“Told ya!” Dustin says with a smirk. “Can I have your pudding now?”

“If that means you’ll shut up.” Mike says through gritted teeth. “Yes.”

“Fuck yeah!” Dustin says ecstatically as he quickly grabs the pudding and rips the top open to eat.

“How... how are you?” Mike asks shakily, now full of nerves.

“I’m good.” El smiles at the boy’s nervousness. “How are you?”

“I’m good.” Mike answers simply. “Did you already eat lunch?”

“Yeah.” El nods her head. “I can clearly see you haven’t touched yours.”

“He was too busy looking for you.” Will says and El can only laugh at the look Mike gives his friends.

“They are really throwing you under the bus now, aren’t they?” El asks and Mike nods.

“Every chance they get.” Mike shakes his head.

“I can see why you can’t stand them sometimes.” El says and Mike gives her a look of ‘I told you so’.

“Feeling is mutual.” Max says before going back to her conversation with Lucas and Will.

“Happy to be back at school?” El asks Mike and he shakes his head.

"For the class part, no." Mike answers honestly "But to be able to see my friends, you, yeah."

"Me?" El asks with shock. "Really?"

"Yeah." Mike says gently. "How about you? Enjoying class?"

"Not so much." El laughs. "But I'm happy to see my friends again."

"Yeah." Mike nods. "You don't have to sit here with us if you'd rather go be with them. I don't want you to think you have to come say hi to us or anything."

"Mike, do I look like someone who would do something just to do it?" El asks and Mike shakes his head.

"I just figured that you'd rather go back outside to them instead of coming to sit and say hi to us." Mike explains.

"I wasn't with them." El shakes her head with confusion.

"You weren't?" Mike asks and she shakes her head no. "I thought that's who you walked out to when you walked past our table to a bit ago."

"Oh, no." El laughs as she shakes her head and Mike looks at her with confusion. "I didn't go out to hang out with them. I had to go drop something off to Mr. Jones."

"Really?" Mike asks her. "I thought you decided you'd rather go hang out with your other friends."

"No." El denies and Mike can feel a sense of relief come over his body. "I was just dropping off my paper because I couldn't get it to print earlier."

"Oh, makes sense." Mike nods at her explanation.

"I was going to tell you as I walked by, but decided not to." El tells him with a smirk and he looks at her with confusion. "Thought I'd give you guys some payback for the bowling alley."

"I had nothing to do with that though." Mike defends and El laughs.

"I know, but it was still a tiny bit fun to see your face as I walked past you." El admits and Mike looks at her with disbelief.

"That's not cool." Mike tells her and lets out a breathy chuckle.

"I know, I'm sorry." El says as she tries to hold her laughter. "Please forgive me."

"I don't know." Mike teases.

"I promise to never do something like that again." El tells him.

"You promise?" Mike asks and El looks at him with a smile.

"Friends don't lie, remember?" El says with a small smirk.

"Good." Mike smiles to himself.

"Seriously, you need to start eating." El tells him. "We only have like 10 minutes left of lunch."

"I know." Mike says but looks at her. "But I'd rather talk to you than eat."

"Really?" El asks and Mike nods; not understanding where this confidence he has with El comes from. "Well, how about we do both? Eat and talk?"

"We?" Mike asks and El nods as she opens his bag of chips and pops one into her mouth before holding the bag out towards him to take a pop one into his own mouth. "Thanks!"

The two teenagers sit there eating and talking as if they've known each other for years. After a few minutes, the rest of the group includes them into their own conversations and they end lunch laughing at some joke that Dustin has just said.

The group disperses as the lunch bell rings. Max and Will go one way as Lucas and Dustin head another. Mike, who's supposed to be heading the way with Lucas and Dustin, instead opts to walk El to

her class; which is completely the opposite way of his.

El doesn't know that though and instead enjoys the walk to class with the lanky boy. Mike, who knows that he'll probably be late to class, doesn't even think twice because the fact that he's able to walk this pretty girl to class and continue to talk to her outweighs the risk of being tardy.

They approach El's class and after one more second of talking, and El thanking Mike, she turns to head into her class. Mike watches as she walks into class and stands there for a seconds until he is startled by the warning bell. Looking at his watch, he knows he has one minute to get to his class or he'll be marked as late.

So without any hesitation, he turns and is in a full out sprint. El happens to turn to look at the door and sees the boy sprint away after the bell is rang. She can't help but laugh as she realizes that he walked her to class the opposite direction of his own class.

Though she's laughing, she can't help but feel butterflies in her stomach at the fact that he risked being tardy to walk her to the classroom. She knows she should start writing down the notes the teacher has on the board, but instead she can't help but think about the tall, lanky boy who makes her smile more than she's ever smiled before.

What's even more crazy is that it's only day 5 of this friendship. I can only imagine what the future days will look like.

Mike, completely out of breath, makes it to his class and sits down just as the bell rings. Dustin and Lucas look at him with smirks on their faces but don't say anything. Which is good because Mike can't breathe to even say anything back if they did.

Mike, still trying to catch his breath, pulls out his book to follow along in whatever the teacher is talking about. As he tries to pay attention, Mike feels his phone vibrate with a notification. He pulls out his phone under his book, so the teacher can't see, and sees who the message is from and what it says.

El Hopper

Today 7:32am

Good morning!

Good Morning Mike!!

Delivered

Today 1:07pm

Did you make it on time?

Yeah lol barely

*Good!! You're pretty fast lol
Thank you for walking me to class...
Even though it almost made you late.*

*It's okay. It was worth it.
I got to talk to you for a couple
extra minutes lol*

*Well if it helps... I enjoyed the
extra couple of minutes too.*

*It makes it even more worth
it than before.*

Good :)

*Yeah lol
Also if you don't have any plans
after school we are all thinking
of going to Sonic to grab some
slushies. You should come.
If you want to of course.*

Yeah!! I'd love to.

GREAT!

*Meet you after school in
the parking lot?*

Yeah. I'll meet you there :)

See you soon!

Sounds good.
